

ANTAPOLOGIA,

Or a Discourse of ~~the~~

EXCUSES;

Setting forth the *Variety* and *Vanity* of them, the Sin and Misery brought in by them, as being the greatest Bar in the way to Heaven, and the ready high way to Hell, being the common snare wherein most of the Children of Men are Intangled and Ruined.

By Jo. Sheffield. M.A. Minister of the Gospel.

Τὴ Παράλογον Παράλογον.

In animam suam peccat, qui se Excusat, repellens proinde a se Indu'gentia Medicinam, & sic vitam sibi propriam ore intercludens. Bernh.

Qui se accusant Excusantur, qui se Excusant recusantur.

Eccles. 7: 29. This only have I found, that God made Man upright, but he hath sought out many Inventions.

Prov. 21. 2. Every way of Man is right in his own Eyes, but the Lord pondereth the Hearts.

Prov. 28. 13. He that covereth his Sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh shall find mercy.

Esay 42. 22. But this is a people robbed and spoyled, they are all of them snared in Holes, and they are bid in Prison Houses: they are for a Prey, and none delivereth; for a Spoil, and none saith, Restore.

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EXCISE

Setting forth the duty on

TO THE
READER.

Reader,
Thou hast in thy Hand a Discourse of
(rather against) Excuses; the great-
est and most over-spreadeng Evil in
the World, and the greatest Enemy to Grace
and Godliness. And take this account of my
Undertaking.

I have observed among all the Arts and
Engines the old Enemy hath made use of, none
have proved so beneficial and expeditious,
as those two mentioned Esa. 5. 20. The one
to call Evil Good, the other to put Dark-
ness for Light. By the first he casts a mist
before our Eyes, when he tempts to sin, saying,
Ye shall not die, but shall be as Gods, ma-
king Evil to appear Good, that we may sin
with less fear; and by putting Darkness
for Light and Light for Darkness, when
we have by his solicitations fallen into sin, he
puts a Vail upon our Consciences, that we
may either lie still more securely, or go on
more boldly, when he hath furnished us with
some specious Excuses to cover our ungodliness,
and

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and sins deformity; thus leading poor Souls blind-folded as those Syrians once were, who (supposing themselves conducted by a friend, and in a safe way) were led into the mouth of danger, and no sooner were their Eyes opened, but they were sensible of their gross mistake.

With these two did he begin the World, when he set up for himself, and affected the Principality of this Lower World, having failed in his higher Aym above, aspiring to more greatness among his fellow Angels.

And so beneficial have they proved to him, that he may (as if laughing) at his own policy and man's simplicity, say to his Associates, what once that Atheistical Name-sake and Vicegerent of his Leo X. said to one of his Cardinals, *Quantum nobis & nostro Coetui profuit illa fabula, &c.* The cursed Atheist spake it of the very Gospel it self. How much have we and our Colleagues gained by that Fable? But by the way had he said, how much have those two Fables profited us, viz. That of Peters Supremacy, and the Keys delivered to him alone, and of Romes Intallibility, as succeeding Peter in all his Apostolical priviledges, he had not said much amiss; for these have been the Popes two Keys by which he hath opened the way to his Vice-Godship on Earth (he is so styled by his

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his Canonists and Parasites, Vice-Deus in Terris) and to his Universal Monarchy over the blinded Christian World, trampling sometimes upon the very Necks of Kings and Emperours. These are the two main supports of the Antichristian Kingdom, and the Rocks on which the present Church of Rome is founded. So those two fore-named black Arts have been the Keys by which the Prince of Darkness hath opened his way to his Conquest of the World, and hath arrived to his wished Supremacy too: to his Godship in the World (so is he called 2 Cor. 4. 4. Deus hujus seculi) and hath attained his desired Universal Monarchy, trampling upon high and low, and triumphing over the deluded sons of men. So that he who shall shake these two Pillars, as Sampson did those two on which the Philistines house was built, will throw down the strongest holds of Satan, and make his Kingdom fall about his Ears, and will deserve his Name should be enrolled among the Chief of Christian Heroes. And as David said once of the Inhabitants of Jebus who had put such scorn upon him, He that shall get up into the Gutter, and take away the lame and blind which are hated of Davids Soul, he shall be Chief, and Captain, 2 Sam. 5. 8. So may I say, who-soever shall take away the Blind and Lame.

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The blind presences whereby Evil is called Good: And the lame Excuses where Light is put for Darknes, deserves in my mind the Name among the first Three, as he that hath done most to the taking away the Reproach of Israel, by disarming the strong man, and taking away his Armour wherein he trusted, and spoiling his House.

I have laid my weak hand to this latter, and have endeavoured (I will not say *Pro vixili*, sed *pro Senili*, *pro Imbecillitate & tenuitate mea*) for as the man is, so is his strength, *Jud. 8. 21.*) to give is a shake, or may rather say, have been at this weaker guide to Samplon, led him to the two Pillars, where he may try his strength.

I am not ignorant of my own many Infirmities; and therefore might well put in my Excuse (had I not professedly written against Excuses) for adventuring to appear in publick in this Critical, Learned, and Eagle-eyed Age; my Weaknesses are many, Style homely, Method, happily not so well digested, and by some I look to be Censured as having said too much, by others too little. I have only this for Excuse; and some Excuses you will see are here allowed, that I have not met with much written designedly on this Subject, which may in some sort Excuse both Author and Matter, and Manner, and Method, and
Style,

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Stile, and the many other Infirmities which the whole Discourse may labour under.

I have taken notice of above an hundred Bad Examples, and have spoken somewhat to the Reproving, I would I could also say to the Removing of them. And another I doubt not, of more Insight into the ways of God and wiles of Satan, may come after and glean an hundred more (and his Gleaning better than all my Vintage) and yet this Hydra hath more Heads than can easily be cut off. Some I have willingly pretermitted to ease my self and the Reader in some sort, and have only touched upon some, not thinking it necessary to enlarge upon all, then should I have written a Volume and not so short a Treatise, the variety and number of the particulars is so great, that to speak fully and satisfactorily to each, would require a workman indeed, and I might have known where to begin, but not where to end.

I have here gathered and set a many Stocks, which a more skilful Hortulane, would have set in a better and more comely Order, and likely have grafted better fruit upon, more pleasant to the Eye and Taste of the Reader, by a more substantial handling, a more smooth, pithy and taking stile, and a more gracious and spiritual strain of Spirit.

But I must say I write not to Scholars or

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quaint Citizens, the Style is as the Author
Subrussick and Inurbane. I write not to
you Fathers and able Learned ones, whose
Unction and Abilities teach you in a much
higher way. I only say I write to you
Children, you weaker ones, who look not
for the strong meat of strong Lines and
high Language, but best relish the plain and
uncompounded milk of the word. Indeed
Ornati res Sancta negat contenta doceri.

And without dissimbling think that Title
best becomes it, which Reverend Perkins pre-
fixed to one of his, which he Inscribed, To
all Ignorant people which desire to be in-
structed. And now it is gone out of my
Hand, say to it as once a Wit said to his;
Vade sed Incultus, yet do I read that
Samson once did great Execution with the
Jaw-bone of an Ass (and never was there
a more unlikely Battle-Ax used) and Gi-
deon again with his Earthen Pitchers (ne-
ver such weak Ordinance employed) and
David with a Sling-stone (never more con-
temptible Arrow shot) But it was in the
Name of the Lord that he went out: And
who knows what a day of small things may
produce? The Lord saveth not by Sword or
Spear, not by Might or Power, Zech. 4.6.

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not by Learning and Eloquence; but he can make the feeble to be as David, Zech. 12. 8. and the weak as Solomon, 1 Cor. 1. 28. the base and contemptible things; and those which are not (if just nothing compared) to bring down the things which are. That no part of the glory may fall to the Instrument; but the whole redound to the praise of the glory of his Grace; who worketh all things according to the Counsel of his own Will.

But to the matter it self. Excuses are the Subject of this Discourse, which I can look upon as no other then Satans Master-piece, and can call them by no siller Name then that Common Black Art, wherein he doth instruct the most of the sons of men; and by this he doth enwile more and hold them almost as fast as he doth those whom he hath trained up to the study and practice of that which is so called *vel iFoxia*, The Black Art. The Fox and Serpent have advantaged Satans Interest more with his Nequaquam moriemini, and his Eritis sicut Dii; ye shall not Die at all, but shall be as Gods, than to appear a Lyon and Dragon in his own colours, saying Cast thy self down head-long, or fall down and worship and make a formal Compact with me. We find by Experience that our English Flocks (the Glory and Wealth of our Land) are more prejudiced by the subtle Foxes lurking

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lurking in their Dens, than by the more savage Wolves, which our prudent Forefathers have happily rid the Land of: And our spiritual Pastors find more prejudice done to the Souls of men, our Spiritual Flocks (otherwise the glory of the Christian Name) by these lurking Excuses, than by those ravenous Wolves of Rome, Jesuites and Seminaries, whom our pious Princes have formerly chased out of the Land by their just Interdicts.

These are the great Abaddon and Apollyon the Destroyers of Souls, the Mice that mar the Land, 1 Sam. 6. 5. The Samsons, destroyers of our Country, that lay Heaps upon Heaps, not of Philistines, but Israelites. The opprobria Theologorum: By these is the Ministry of Gods faithful Servants baffled, and rendred unsuccessful, not by open contradiction, but by a tacit reserve and resoluteness aforehand how far they will go, no further. Excuses they are Satans Off-spring, Sins great Grandmother, that came in with the Fall, begotten between Sin and Guilt, Sin the Father, Guilt the Mother: God created Man upright it is said, but Man (fallen) sought out many Inventions; among which, Excuses to cloke and cover Sin were the first and are the chiefest. An Epidemical Evil and as General almost as Original Sin, and bad as that Universal Deluge, in Noah's time,

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time, overspread the face of the whole Earth.

They are the old Primitive Language learnt of Satan in Paradise; and though other Languages have been lost, or so confounded that we hardly know what remains of them, this remains entire and may be called the Universal Character of the World and the Mother Language of all Nations, who as soon as born, and learn to go and speak; learn to go astray and speak Lies. An Evil so much the more to be lamented because Hereditary & Connatural, born with us. No Nation so barbarous, Religion so gross, Worship so impious, Superstition so fond, Manners so brutish, Opinion so irrational, but hath borrowed somewhat from Excuses to defend them: No Age, Sex, Nation, Condition, sort and rank of men without them. The youngest Child, hath learned one and the elder Father more, none so simple and ignorant as to be destitute of one, and the more knowing and cunning (the more the pity) the more store.

Take any man without Excuses and you may say Rara avis; that you have seen a strange Sight. Paganisme and Idolatry had never been known in the World, nor had continued, had it not been for them. Popery had never stood so long, had it not been underprop by them. No Wars, Murder, Rapine, Adulteries, Witchcrafts, False Witness, Per-
jury,

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Jeury, Cheating, Lying, Equivocation, Pride, Revenge, firing Towns and Cities, Blowing up of Parliaments, Assassination of Princes, Butchering and Massacring of People had ever been in the World, had it not been for this great Mother of Abominations. No Heresie, Schisme, Doctrine of Devils, Corruption of Worship had ever troubled the Church; No Sedition, Treason, Rebellion, Conspiracies, Factions, Innovations, Oppressions, Tumults, had ever troubled the State had it not been for these the setters on, or Abettors. No such persecutions, opposition and slighting of Faithful Ministers and sound Doctrine, no such scorn cast upon ways of Godliness where the Gospel is professed, no such backwardness to repent, reform, believe and obey and become true practisers of Godliness in the power, but for them. Nothing but Piety, Charity, Peace, Love, Concord, Friendship, Faithfulness, Truth, Sincerity in the World, were it not for them.

Take away these and you take away all that is hurtful, rid the World of them, and what a World should we see! weed these out of the Church and it becomes a Paradise; a Garden or Well inclosed: Yea, take these from a man and you restore him to his Integrity and you have a real, terrene Saint.

Take a view a little and consider what is
the

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the great Propugnaculum, or Bulwark and
 which all Evil shelters it self against the
 weapons of our Spiritual Warfare, but Extremities &
 what is the Obex, the obstacle that renders
 the most powerful Ministry inefficacious but this, &
 we must therefore fetch these Kings out of
 their Caves, or we do nothing. If we could
 stop up these Wells and cut down these fruitful
 Trees as they were commanded, 2 Kings 3: 19.
 Then should Israel weaken the Enemy and the
 Ministers live at more hearts-ease. But
 while these remain (as we say Intus Existens
 prohibet alienum) we do but beat the Air.
 There is no entrance for truth in the pinner of it.
 This we shall find if we take a view of most of
 those things wherein the Minister hath to do.
 E. g. First if the Minister give warning
 from God to avoid Sin and cry out, Hæst and
 escape for thy life, Cito, Longe, tarde, as
 from the Pestilence. How ill do men take it.
 Look back with Lots wife, linger with Lot, as
 loth to part with Sin as Jacob with Benjamin,
 as tender of it as David of Absalom; Deal
 kindly I pray you for my sake with the young
 man, spare him, hurt him not. Is it not a
 little one say they, a venial Sin? may it not
 consist with grace? If I never do worse, I hope
 I shall do well enough: Have not others done
 as bad or worse, yet found mercy? I have
 Examples, great ones, multitude on my side,
 and

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and some good men have done the like. It is my Diana (my Livelyhood) my Dalilah, (or right Eye) allow me this only, I shall do any thing, only spare me Herodias. Intreat for me said Pharaoh, abate me but this. I hope my Calling, Place, Quality, Profession, and the custom and manner of the times may Excuse me; mean while I shall live quietly, peaceably and civilly, and do what the Law requires.

2. If we deal with men to confess and acknowledge their Sins, how many shifts, windings and turnings? how longe're we can get that hard word Peccavi out of their mouths. And if they do not storm as the Sodomites at Lot, and look on the Minister as Ahab did on Elias, or Micaiah; then what Excuses do they make? Bear with me I pray, it was an Over-sight I confess, but I hope my Nature, Custom, Passion, Provocation may Excuse me: Or it was done in my Ignorance, Childhood, or when I was not my self; but then in my Drink, Heat, Anger, Passion, Fear, Hast, and on the sudden. Another saith, it was in Jest, Mirth, Merriment, I had no ill meaning in the Earth; another, had I not reason? I was wronged, urged, abused, and it was to an Enemy or a worthless person. Another, what I did was in zeal and out of Conscience to make good my Vow, Promise, Oath which I had taken;

my

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my Welfare, Credit, Honour, lay at stake, disgrace, danger and prejudice was prevented, my Friend pleased, much good procured: Besides I tell you again it is the only Infirmary I am subject to; my Rimmon, herein the Lord be merciful to me, I know not how to leave it, or live without it, and it is hard if a man have but One Eye Lamb in his Bosome, and the Minister would deprive him of that. Besides the matter is not so great, I am not an Adulterer, Murderer or perjured person, it was but once neither. I should have been singular, unsociable, biffed at, had I done otherwise. I am civil, take pains for my Living, pay every man his own, I trust the Lord will be more merciful, then these Ministers tell us, or God help us; what will become of all else? and twenty more such put-offs men have.

3. If we cannot but yield it to be a Sin, then have we other Excuses ready, If it was Evil blame others, not me; I am a Child, did as my Parents bade me; a Servant, and must do what my Master commands and keep his Secrets; in a low condition, and my dependence was on such whom I must not disoblige. I am of so good a Nature as I can't be refractory, if I am any bodies foe, it is my own, no mans else, if I spend, it is but my own, what my Friends left me, or I came fairly by. I had Commands to warrant, Promises to allure, Threats

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Threats to fright, Friends and Companions to
important, Examples and multitudes to ac-
company me, and could I stand against all
these. If Hercules thought it hard to en-
counter with two, how could I stand before so
many Hercules's? Besides what some scrupulous
persons (more precise then wise) cry out a-
gainst, is the custom of the Countrey, the mode
of the time, place and society that I converse
with; and the most men I meet with do the
like, and it were hard if God should condemn
all the World, but a few who are singular, and
love to please themselves, though they please no
body else.

4. If dealt with to repent and break off
Sin, we stand up in defence of it as if we had
taken it into our Protection as did the Ben-
jamites those Sons of Belial, who in they should
have given up to the hand of Justice. And
then do we seek to stop the Ministers, and Con-
science men too, putting far from us all
fear of danger, crying out, are we not all Sin-
ners, have not the best their failings? Is any
man perfect in this life? Some again cast
the fault on Satan, and some are ready to
charge it upon God; and say it was Gods will
it should be so, or it had never been, God de-
nied me his Grace, then could I neither do, nor
be better than be enabled me, &c.

5. Press men to more strictness and amend-
ment

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ment of life: then do they flatter themselves, and reply, Is not God infinite in mercy? did not Christ die for Sinners? The promises of the Gospel are full of Comfort, and I ground my Faith on them, and such doctrines as are preached by our best Divines, viz. Of Free Grace, of Justification by Faith, Remission of Sin, and Pardon upon true Repentance; and a great observation I have made, I hope I shall never forget it, the blessed End I have seen some make without all this ado.

6. Set them up to a pursuit of Holiness, and a Conscientious course of Life, how are they ready to plead the badness of the times, the disrepute Holiness is in, the Inconveniencies, Damage, Detriment, Disgrace we may meet with; He that departeth from Evil, maketh himself a Prey: The Aspersions & Nick-names cast upon the Godly, the troubles and tentations of the Righteous, the Lyon in the way, the many difficulties in the way of Salvation. The peace, and prosperity of the wicked, the divisions among Professors, the scandalous Lives of some Ministers, and the foul miscarriage of some Professors, and many such like.

Lastly, warn them to take heed of Security, and to work out their Salvation with fear and trembling, they have their answer ready; Gods Decrees are unchangeable, if I am Elected I shall be saved, if not, I shall perish whatsoever

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I do; all Endeavours are in vain; all good works we are taught do neither merit grace, nor glory.

So again, when we call upon men to duty, to come in and receive Christ; How do all with one consent make Excuse? my Calling, Oxen, Farm, Merchandize, will not permit and give me time; the work is good I confess, I speak not against it, but the time is not yet; I am a Child, ignorant, an unlearned person, I have a full purpose hereafter, when more at leisure, when out of debt, settled in the world, when I have buried my aged Father, and my self my own man, and my estate in my own hand; but let me alone till then, or till I am old, sick, dying, and then I will do what you will have me.

So again when we persuade men to believe; how backward and slow of Heart are many to embrace the Promises, rejecting and in as much as in them is frustrating the grace of God, with such like put-offs; the Promise is good, and too good for me, I too bad, altogether unworthy, neither holy, nor humble enough, the means are unlikely, &c. or I fear it is now too late, the day of Grace is past, the Decree is gone forth, Providences are dark, Promises delayed, my sins, afflictions, fears, doubts, temptations great and dreadful, Satan assaults, dogs, insults, triumphs; and which is saddest
of

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if all, God hath forsaken me, my Prayer are not heard, the Vision doth not speak, my Flesh fails, my Heart fails, and my Hope is even giving up the Ghost.

I might go on, Reader, thus to enlarge and multiply particulars, but must crave thy pardon for this tediousness; if either thou desirest more, or art not at leisure to read the whole, let me advise thee to turn to Chap. 9, 10, 11. and seriously consider what thou there readest of the variety, vanity, finfulness and danger of Excuses. But here thou seest enough to convince thee how common and frequent Excuses are, and how justly to be spoken against. All the world is undone by them, nothing but Excuses, Excuses every where. Every man hath his Omer full. So that call for what you will, and put men upon what you will, all you must look for, is to be put off with an Excuse. As he said once, To will is present, to perform I find not, so to Excuse is present, to perform I find not an inclination. To fly from, repent of, and turn from sin, requires pains; to perform the duties of Sobriety, Righteousness and Godliness requires pains; to exercise Faith and Patience, requires pains, and so the whole of Real Christianity, but an Excuse is easie, cheap, and costs little.

I shall, trouble thee no longer Reader, but desire God to give us all his grace to avoid all sinful and destructive Excuses, and that in

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stead of those, we may get our selves furnished with some of those Better Excuses recommended in the end of this Discourse, in particular those five I would commend at present in stead of all others.

First, that of a good Conscience; then thou needest no other, of which Saint Bernad saith well, Optima Cuique Excusatio est Testimonium Conscientiæ: The best Excuse of all, is an Excusing Conscience. This was St. Paul's Excuse. Our rejoicing is this, The testimony of our Conscience, 2 Cor. 1. 12. It is above a thousand Witnesses we say, and I may add above ten thousand Excuses. Saint Peter calls it the saving answer of a good Conscience, and prefers the virtue of it above that of Baptisme alone, 1 Pet. 3. 21.

2. Next to that, ready, sincere and universal obedience; then no need of any devised Excuse, when thou canst say with Jacob, My righteousness shall answer and speak for me, Gen. 30. 33. and with the Apostle, we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness (as Excuse-makers do,) 2 Cor. 4. 3.

3. Because Conscience may yet accuse, and our Obedience falls short, the next good Excuse is Humiliation and Repentance, timely and true. Shimei after all his foul-mouthed railing and cursing, sped better at David's hands

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hands by his making hast to humble himself and crying mercy, 2 Sam. 19. 20. then that leſt guilty Amalekite, who brought a Crown coming in his confidence of good Service, 2 Sam. 1. 5. And the ſelf-condemning Publican at Gods hands, than the ſelf-juſtifying Pharisee. Neither were any received to mercy at Joſuah's hands, but the ſelf-humbling, mercy-begging Gibeonites, all that ſtood upon their defence were cut off.

4. With humble Confession and Prostration joyn fervent Prayer. This was David's Excuse or Relief, Against thee have I ſinned, turn thy face from my ſins; and the Lord answered, I have taken away thy Sin. Self-accuſation and Repentance with Prayer obtains abſolution and remiſſion. This is the Apology or ſelf-clearing mentioned, 2 Cor. 7. 11. If we therefore cannot come in with the elder Brothers Apology, I have ſerved thee theſe ſo many years, neither tranſgreſſed at any time, then come in with the younger Brothers confeſſion and ſupplication, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven and againſt thee and am no more worthy to be called thy Son, &c.

5. Laſtly, above all, fly to Chriſt by Faith, that he may make thy Excuse by interceding for thee: His Office is to mediate, reconcile

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and plead for us as our Advocate, to undertake for us our Sorrows, to take away Sin as our Propitiation; then what need of Excuses what Sin is taken away through him we shall be presented unblamable & unchangeable before God, Col. 2. 22. Art thou therefore overwhelmed with Sin, Grief, Fear and Dismaydness, cry to him as Hezekiah did, Esay 38. 14. Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me, and with thy words of the expiring Thief, Lord remember me now thou art in thy Kingdom, Luke 23. 42.

And now I have no more to do, but to commend thee to God, and to the word of his Grace, and to intreat thy favourable acceptance of this Discourse (such as it is) and to pray that thou wouldest make thy best of it. This I hope thou wilt find as I do, as St. Austin said of his Writings, while he was taken up in writing, that he was kept from being idle, or worse employed; so while thou art Reading, thou art kept from spending thy time more unprofitably, unless thou hast in thy hand some more profitable Book; of which (blessed be God) our present age is well stored, and therein I would by no means be thy hinderance, only desire thy Prayers for a Blessing upon this and all the Endeavours of other Godly Men, whether Preaching or Writing, whose aim is, next to

To the Reader:

the glory of God and the declaring his Will, to
seek and further the Peace and welfare of his
Church, and to contribute their utmost to
the furthering of the Salvation of Souls. In
which number is

The meanest of Gods servants,

Jo. Sheffield.

To the Reader.

My dear Sir, I have the pleasure to
acknowledge the receipt of your
letter, and am glad to hear that
you are so much interested in
the history of the nation of Israel.

The method of Gods service.

Jo. Speed.

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CHAP. III.

Excuses from others, are taken from other Persons, 2 Things.

1 From other persons, 1 Men, 2 God, 3 Satan.

Men distinguished into 3 Classes, 1 } Superiours,
2 } Equals,
3 } Inferiours.

2 Men considered, as { Good,
{ Bad.

3 as { Friends,
{ Foers,
{ Strangers.

1 Excuses taken 1 from Superiours.

1 Their Example.

2 Counsel.

3 Commands.

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(81)

ANTAPOLOGIA:
OR, A
DISCOURSE
OF
EXCUSES.

CHAP. I.

The Common Sin of Excuses.

Ur first Parents having eaten the
sowr Grape, their own and their
Childrens Teeth have been set
on edge, still hankering after
forbidden Fruit. And as if *Sin* and *Excuses*
were Twins, as *Esa* and *Jacob*, holding each
other by the heel, we still run after the
Taste of the Tree of Evil, to the Fig-tree,
to borrow some Leaves to make an Apron,
and think if we get into the Thicket of
Excuses, and can say *All bid*, that we may
say *All's well*; not remembering the Voice

we shall hear in the Cool of the Day, (the Evening of our Life) *Adam where art thou?* This is a great and sore Evil which hath tainted our Nature, and is the remain of that first poyson wherewith the old Serpent in Paradise infected our first parents.

Excuses have hitherto us out of Paradise, and now obstruct our way to Heaven: The great Supplanter then took away our Birthright, now our Blessing. Excuses obstruct our way to Heaven, being still a Block or Bar in our way thither. Whenever God calls to a Duty, Excuses are a Block to hinder Obedience, that we cannot go forward: When God calls again from Sin, Excuses are a Bar to hinder Repentance, that we cannot go backward. But all the way to Hell is thick strew'd with Excuses, and under covert of them most deluded Souls (as *Ahab* in his Disguises once) run confidently and fearlessly upon their certain and unavoidable ruine.

Our Blessed Saviour, in that Parabolical Scheme, *Luke 14. 16, 17, 18, 19.* doth, as in a Map. set down how all the Race of Mankind is tainted with this Evil.

A certain man made a great Supper, and bade many; and sent his Servants at Supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready: But they all wish
one

one consent began to make *Excuses*. The first said, I have bought a piece of Ground, and must needs go see it, I pray thee have me excused. Another said, I have bought five yoke of Oxen, and I go to prove them, I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a Wife, therefore I cannot come.

I pray thee have me excused, and I pray thee have me excused, is the answer of them all in effect.

In which Scripture you may, as in a Map, see on the one side, the *kindness* of God to Man; on the other, Mans *unkindness* to God, and to himself: In the one, Gods rich *Grace* displayed; in the other, Mans vile *Ingratitude* described; Gods care of Mans Salvation, Mans carelessness. What could God do more to make them happy? He provides, invites, waits, sends out again. What could they do more to make themselves unhappy? They put off all by evasions, and shifts, and subterfuges. St. Matthew Mat. 22. 5. hath it, *They made light of it.*

Here you may see the nature of that sin we are about to discourse of, *Excuses*. 2. The *universality* of this sin, *They all wish one consent began to make Excuses*; as if they had laid their Heads together, and resolved there would none of them go. 3. The *particularity*, yea *singularity* of this sin; not

a man of them to seek of his Excuse: The first had his Excuse; the second, his; the third, a third: *So many men, so many Excuses.* It is the sin of all, it is the sin of every one; whence this shall be our *Observation*, upon which this Discourse shall run, viz.

*"It is the General sin of the World and
 "of those in the Church too, All and every
 "Mans sin, to slight and reject the Grace of
 "God, and to endanger their own Eternal
 "Salvation, by a company of fair and speci-
 "ous in shew, but indeed slight, vain, and
 "frivolous Excuses.*

It is the sin of *the World*. Wo to the World because of Excuses. It is the sin of *the Church*. Wo to the Church, and to many that are called to partake of rich Gospel-grace, which they reject and make void by Excuses. It is the most common sin of the World.

Divide the World into three parts: The first and best is the least, of such as gladly receive the Gospel, and say with Samuel, *Speak Lord, thy Servant heareth*, 1 Sam. 3. 10. or with St. Paul, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* A little Flock of these, there are but few of them.

2. There is a far greater and worse number of them, that in stead of accept-
 ing,

ing, shew foul contempt of the Gospel, which breaks out in their opposition and persecution of it, as in that Parable akin to this appears, *Mat. 22. 6. The remnants took the servants, and intreated them shamefully and slew them.* A Remnant, but a vile and very great Remnant of prophane Persecuters and Opposers.

But *the greatest* (though not the worst) part, is of our Excuse-makers. It is not said, they all with one consent came in. All are not *Accepters*. Nor all with one consent persecuted and oppos'd; but the Remnant: Too great a Remnant too. All are not *Persecuters*: But all with one consent made excuse. All are Excuse-makers; all guilty here, more or less.

A sin it is in which the most godly sometimes have been faulty, as well as the most wicked: *Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Jeremy,* as well as *Cain, Saul, Judas.*

The most *ancient* of sins, and the *First-fruits* of the first sin. When *Adam* and *Eve* had eaten that forbidden Fruit, the next thing was to frame an excuse. Hast thou *Gen. 3. 10,* eaten of that Tree, *Adam?* *The Woman 11, 12, 13.* *that thou gavest me.* Hast thou eaten, *Eve?* *The Serpent beguiled me,* said she. Dost thou hide thy self from me, *Adam?* *I saw I was naked,* said he again. Nothing but
 B 3 Excuses,

Excuses, and so sin upon sin. *Cain* the first born of *Adam*, when he had shed his Brothers blood, thinks to put it off with Gen. 4l 9, an Excuse, *Am I my Brothers keeper?* But it is wonderful to observe what ado the Prophet had with *Saul*, after he had so grossly transgressed the Commandment, to get him speak that hard word *Peccavi*: But one while he pleads innocency; he had 1 Sam. 15. spared the Cattel indeed, some of them; 13, 15, &c. but it was for *Sacrifice*, and they were fat ones: Then would he cast it upon the People, then upon his Fear. No owning, but excusing his sin; till *Samuel* told him downright, he was rejected for his halting and disobedience.

Excuses are the most general and prevailing sin of the World; the *Peccatum in deliciis*, the sin that is made most of by Simple and Gentle, High and Low; none but cherish and harbor it: The greatest Persons, as *Saul* a King; greatest Politicians, as *Jeroboam*; and the simplest Swain. The Sluggard hath an excuse to spare his pains, *A Lion is in the way*: And take any one without his excuse, and call him a very poor Man indeed. What the Prophet Prov. 26. 13. noteth of the Idolater, *he that is so impoverished that he hath no Oblation*, yet seeketh a piece of Timber *that will not rot to make*

an Idol of, and then applauds himself when he hath done; I may say of the poorest and simplest: None so poor, but he seeketh to get some rotten Excuse or other, of which he makes *an Idol* to quiet his clamorous, and otherwise unsatisfied Conscience. *Saul* had his Excuse for disobedience, *1 Sam. 15. 15.* After for his going *to the Witch: Jeroboam*, an Excuse for his *Calves in Dan and Bethel*; the *Jews*, for stoning of *Christ* had an Excuse at hand, *Joh. 10. 33.* and another for Crucifying of him. *We have a Law, and by our Law he ought to die, Joh. 19. 7.*

CHAP. II.

The several Kinds of Excuses.

E*xcuses* are not all alike; some are good, some bad. We meet with several holy, just, honourable Excuses in Scripture, which are for our imitation. Such was Holy *Joseph's*, when solicited to uncleanness by his impudent Mistress, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* *Gen. 39. 9.* That of *David*, when pressed to avenge himself of his Master and Sovereign *Saul*, *God forbid that I should do this thing to my Master*

Master the Lords Anointed, 1 Sam. 24. 6. and again, 1 Sam. 26. 9. Such that of the three Worthies, Dan. 3. 16. We are not careful to answer thee in this matter; our God is able to deliver us out of thy hand, and if not, we neither can nor will worship thy Image.

Acts 5. 29. Such that of the Apostles, We must obey God rather than Men. But our Discourse is professedly about bad Excuses, I therefore pass those over.

Evil Excuses are of *three sorts*, relating
 1. To *Sin*. 2. *Duty*. 3. *Faith*. We begin with such as refer to Sin, and such are of two sorts. 1. Such as are *homebred*, and taken from self. 2. Some *extraneous*, and borrowed from others.

They are very many that relate to all these Heads; I intend not an enumeration of all (that were almost endless) but take notice of such as are most obvious.

1. *Denying
the Fact.*

In the first place, to begin with those that refer to Sin: The first Excuse I shall take notice of, is, *to deny the Fact*. Not I, not I, is the old Put-off. Little less was that of our first Parents, when questioned about the first Transgression; Not I, but the Woman; Not I, but the Serpent. The like *Judas* his impudent Reply, *Is it I? q. d. Who will say it is?* But most palpable that of *Gebazi*, who by one Lie told in his Masters

Masters name, got of Naaman two great Bags of Silver, as much or more than he could carry, and two Changes of Rayment, and reckoned with himself what Purchases he should make of Olive-yards, Vineyards, &c. But when he came back to his Master with another Lie in his Mouth, (as one Lie leads to another) *Thy Servant a Kings 3. went nowhither*; (as denying the Fact) he ²⁵ received a sad Doom, *The Leprosie of Naaman stick to thee, and to thy Seed for ever.* A fit and just Brand for the Liars Forehead. Had every Liar one such, there would be many a foul Face to be seen in the Streets. But how ordinary is it with young and old, Servants and Children, when done amiss, to deny the fact, thinking thereby to excuse and extenuate the fault, which doth but aggravate it, and of one fault makes two, as our Divine Poet,

Dare to be true, nothing can need a lie; Herbert.
A fault that needs it most, grows two
thereby.

He that covereth his sin (by a lie, or denial) Prov. 28.
shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and 3.
forsoaketh, shall find mercy both with God
and Man.

2. A second sort will not tell you a
down-

2. *Artificial* downright Lie, but as handsomly as they
al *Storie*, can smother the Truth by an *Artificial* *Sto-*
and fair ry, and think their work is done. Thus
Tale.

did *Joseph's* Brethren, when they had sold
 their Brother, come home with a fair Tale,
 having stript him of his Garment, and dipt
 it in Blood, shew'd it to their Father ; This
 we found, whose Garment it is we know
 not, *Discern thou whether it be thy Sons*, I
 or no : And thought they should never
 have heard more of it. But not onely Mur-
 der, but Lying, and all Deceit will out ;

they were afterwards brought to much
 shame and horror for the fact ; So, true is
 that of the Wiseman, *A lying tongue is but*
for a moment ; but the lip of truth shall be
 established for ever ; may be blamed, ne-
 ver shamed.

Prov 11.
 19.

3. *Igno-*
rance.

A third sort comes and pleads *Igno-*
rance, and saith he knew not that it was
 evil. This was wicked *Balaam's* excuse,
 when the Angel met him with a drawn
 Sword ; *I did not know*, saith he, *that it was*
not thy mind that I should not go, I will
 therefore return, if it displease thee, *Num.*
22. 35. Yes, *Balaam*, yes ! thou knewest
 well enough ; for the Lord had said ex-
 pressly, *ver. 12.* Thou shalt not go, neither
 curse them at all : Yet go he would, and
 curse them too, though not in word, yet
 by

by that more cursed and pernicious counsel that he gave the *Midianites*, to entice the *Israelites* both to spiritual and bodily Fornication, with their Idolatrous Feasts, and then with their Daughters. But though he escaped for a while, he was after cut a pieces *Nam. 31. 8* with the Sword.

It is true, there is an Ignorance, which if it be real (not pretended) invincible (not affected) doth in some sort excuse *a tanto*, though not *toto*, doth lessen the offence: Such was *Paul's*, who therefore found mercy upon his repentance, because what he had done formerly against the Church, he had done it *ignorantly*, and in his state of *1 Tim. c.* unbelief; yet did he never after plead his *13.* Ignorance by way of Excuse, but every where laments it, and the sad effects of it.

4. A fourth stands up in his own defence, *4 My Na-* and pleads *his Nature*, saying, It is my nature, and I cannot help it; my nature, and I must be born with; my nature is to be hasty, cholerick, &c. The godly mans grief is the wicked mans excuse. Thou hast more cause to blush and be ashamed of the depravedness of thy nature, and to pray to be made partaker of the Divine nature. *1 Pet. 1. 3* We pitty the Child who hath casually licked Poyson, who is sick, swells, vomits, purgeth, sweats, &c. and dies if it be not expelled;

expelled ; but hate and kill the Toad and venomous Asp whose nature it is.

Shall *Cain* plead , my nature is to be bloody ? *Nimrod*, mine to be Tyrannical ? *Pharaoh*, mine to be obstinate ? *Haman*, mine to be haughty ? *Nabal*, mine to be curriish ? *Ishmael*, mine to scoff ? *Jezabel*, mine to be unchast ; and *Belshazzar*, mine to be jovial and rant ? Then let the Lion, Bear, Tyger, Wolf, and Serpent plead, our nature is to raven, devour, destroy, and poyson ; let us alone : The Thorn and Briar, our nature is to prick and tear, therefore let us grow in the Garden. This argues the height of the malignity of sin , that it hath poysoned the Vitals, as of that Infection under the Law which had taken

Lev. 13. 52 *Warp and Woofe* , and was therefore adjudged to the Fire. *David*, and other holy men, have sadly lamented the corruption of their nature ; and shall any make that an excuse ? Holy St. *Austin* confesseth of himself , That before his Conversion he was wont to please and flatter himself with some such excuse , and fain would have charged his sin upon somewhat else , his nature, or any thing, (he saith he could not tell whar.) But, saith he, my case was the

Non mihi
videbatur
esse nosse
nescio
quam eti-

am in nobis naturam--- Excusare me amabam, & accusare nescio
aliud quod mecum esset, & non ego essem. Conf. l. 4. c. 10.

more

more desperate and incurable, because I thought not my self to be such a sinner. And I went on, saith he, *ad excusandas excusationes*, to make excuse upon excuse: But yet this (he said) was his practice, before he knew God; but after, sadly bewails it.

5. Another is not ashamed to plead *Custom* to excuse himself; It is an ill custom I have got, I am sorry for it, God forgive me, but I know not how to help it. Thus tell the Swearer of his Oaths, the Drunkard of his Bruishness, the Prophane of his scurrilous Language; all excuse it with this pretence, Custom is a Tyrant, and hath overmastered them. But did ever Prisoner at the Bar plead thus for himself before the Judge? My Lord, I beg your pardon, I was so brought up, I have long used to cut a Purse, It hath been my Trade many a day to set upon men in the High-way, I know not how to leave it. And shall this pass for a good excuse at Gods Bar, do you think? Our Laws do justly deny the Book to such as stand convicted of the second Offence: And the Law of God did appoint of the dumb Beast, That if the Ox had got a haunt of pushing with the Horn, and the Owner knew of it, and did not keep him in, but he gored one to death, *Ox and Owner both should be put to death.* Or if the Leprosie

5. Custom.

Ex. 11.39.

Lev. 14.
45.

prosic should break out afresh in the House, after two or three viewings of the Priest, it was to be *pulled down to the ground*. And shall any be so void of Reason, as to think custom in sin may plead Prescription, and obtain a License? The vast Ocean is made up of Drops multiplied, and the greatest sum of multiplied Units or Cyphers, and the most desperate Estate of a sinners reiterated and repeated Acts, which beget a custom and habit. St. Bernard describes the steps by which a man comes to the height of sin, saying, *At first band sin is modest, and ashamed, and heavy; then less heavy; after, not heavy at all, but light; then sweet, at last natural and unavoidable: So that at first what was intolerable to be done, is impossible to be left undone.* And

Conf. 1. 9. St. Austin tells us of his Mother Monica, That having once got a taste of the Wine, by now a sip and then a sip, she grew to such pass, that she would take up her full Cups, till she got the name of a *Meribibula*, and was taunted for it, as if she had been an unreasonable Tosspot, or wicked Gossip. And speaking of himself, When time was, Satan, saith he, got me into his clutches, when he had prevailed over my Will to yield, then did he make of it an Iron Chain, wherewith I was bound; and this Iron Chain

Conf. 1. 8.
6-7.

was,

was no other but my ferrea voluntas, made of no other Matter or Metal but my Iron and stiffnecked Will. Give not way therefore at first, and keep out of the Devils Circle: For, out of the Will, saith the same Father, once beginning to yield, springs Lust, out of which, when it hath conceived ariseth Custom; out of Custom, not resisted, Necessity; out of Necessity, Death: As much to this purpose the holy Apostle, Jam. 1. 13.

Custom is not such a Tyrant, but if the fault were not in a Mans own perverse Will, it might be overmastered. The Father once refuted this vain Argument of Customs Plea, by a plain Demonstration. The Common People, saith he, were wont time out of mind to wash in such a Bath; the King sets out a Proclamation, that none should come into it more; there's none so hardy as to attempt it. We have seen in our time some who had been in Arms, and wont constantly to go with Swords by their sides, when commanded to depart the City or lay by their Swords, present obedience was yielded. So it would be, if men had the like regard to God's Commands, as they have to Man's Precepts; this Plea of Custom would fall to the ground.

6. *It was
in Drink.*

6. Another comes, and hath for his Excuse, That he was not himself, he knew not what he did, *he was in Drink.* And is it not good reason he should be excused, think ye; and that one sin should excuse another? This is so far from extenuating, that it doth highly aggravate the sin. *Wine indeed is a mocker, strong Drink is raging:* It is a Quarreller, Fighter, Dueller, Murderer, Adulterer; what not? any thing, every thing that is naught: *But he that is deceived thereby, is not wise,* saith Solomon, nor guiltless, but double guilty. The Sword is also a bloody and milchievous Instrument, hath taken away the life of thousands; but must the Weapon or Metal be blamed, or the Man that abused it? *Drunkennes* is a great and big-bellied sin; who knows what monstrous Births it may bring forth? *Eating* was the Mother of *Original* sin; but *Drinking* may go for the Mother of *all Actual* sins. The Cup of Drunkennes is like the Harlots, full of all abominations, and filthiness of Fornication; like *Ciree's Cup*, hath an enchanting Vertue to transform Men into Swine: So that here you may see one Swine wallowing in the mire of his own Vomit, another in the Streets, another in the Bed of Uncleanneſs, and another in the Blood of his Comrade. It hath a
strange

strange operation even upon the most sober, when once tasted of. How did it expose the Holy Patriarch to the derision of his wicked Son? Another mortified Saint it turned for the present into an incestuous Sodomite. Look not therefore on the Wine when it shews its colour, and sparkles in the Glass; remember at last it will bite and sting like an Adder and Serpent, and thou knowest not what it may make thee see, and say, or do; *Thine eye shall behold strange Women, and thy mouth will speak strange words*; and when Wine is in, thou knowest not what strange things thou mayst be put upon. Gen. 9. 21.
Gen. 9.
Prov. 23.
31. 32.

Oh England, England! This is one of thy National and Crying Sins: Drunkenness, and the Abominations that attend it, as so many Familiars, or Evil Spirits, dancing about the Cup. We may say with the Prophet, *Every Table is full of Vomit, and every Bed full of uncleanness. Whoredoms, Wine, and new Wine, hath taken away Englands heart and glory.* This, with other sins, hath filled the Cup of our Iniquities, and caused the Lord in his just Judgment to give us this Cup of Trembling to drink of; Pestilence, Fire, Sword, hath been the portion of our Cup: Yet thou seest it not, and sittest with Solomon's Ecc. 31. 2.
H. 4. 11.

C Drunkard,

Prov. 23.
ult.
Joel 1. 5.

Drunkard, *When I awake, I will to it again. Awake ye Drunkards, weep and howl, all ye drinkers of Wine*, saith the Prophet. And consider how many fearful Woes are pronounced against this beastly Sin of Drunkenness. There is one Woe *Isa. 5. 11.* another *Isa. 5. 22.* a third *Isa. 28. 1.* a fourth *Habak. 2. 15.* Besides many in the New Testament, *Matth. 24. 49, 50, 51.* *1 Cor. 6. 10.* *Gal. 5. 21.* *Woe upon Woe.* The Drunkard hath one Woe upon his Face, *Prov. 23. 29. Who bath woe? who bath sorrows*, but he? Another in his State, *Prov. 23. 21.* Another on his ragged back, *ibid.* Another all over his Body, Diseases, Aches, Cramps, Gout, &c. bred by this Distemper. Another worse upon his Heart and Understanding, *Hos. 4. 11.* And the worst of all yet behind, *1 Cor. 6. 10. Gal. 5. 21.* There's a Woe for the *morning-Drunkard, Isa. 5. 11.* A Woe for the afternoon and *Evening-Drunkard, Isa. 5. 11.* A Woe for the *merry Drunkard, Isa. 5. 12.* A Woe for the *mad Drunkard, Prov. 23. 29.* the *quarrelling Drunkard.* A Woe for the *red-faced Drunkard, ibid.* A Woe for the *babbling Drunkard, ibid.* A Woe for the *wanton and unclean Drunkard, Prov. 23. 33.* A Woe for the *fighting Drunkard, Matth. 24. 29.* A Woe for the *mighty Drunkard, Isa. 5. 22.*

Isa. 5. 22. A Woe for the Master Drunkard, Habak. 2. 15, 16. Yea, a Woe for the common Drunkard, and for all the knot of Drunkards, 1 Cor. 6. 10.

7. The like Excuse is made by the next, who saith, Though I was not in Drink, yet I was not my self, *I was in Passion.* And indeed, what is Passion, but a dry Drunkenness, and short Madness? and doth as much disturb Reason, as Wine or Phrensie, for the time. This was all the Plea those Sons of Jacob made for their barbarous cruelty towards the Shechemites: They thought themselves excusable for their Passion; and their Passion, for the Provocation: *Should he deal with our Sister as Gen. 34. with an Harlot?* But what said their Father to it? *Me have you troubled; nothing ever so much troubled me in my life: you have made me to stink, and my Religion too.* Neither did he onely testifie his detestation of the Fact when it was fresh, but thought of it the longest day of his life; and on his Death-bed, when he called his Sons together to receive each of them a Fathers Blessing, he bequeaths this Legacy to those two Brethren, *Simeon and Levi are Brethren in Evil, Instruments of Cruelty are in their Habitation: Cursed be their wrath, for it was cruel; and their anger, for it was*

fierce, &c. And it is recorded of *Theodosius*, a godly Emperor, when he had commanded a cruel Execution upon the Citizens of *Theſſalonica*, for an affront given him, that *St. Ambroſe* would not admit him to enter into the Church doors, or come to the Lords Table, till he had done Penance, and acknowledged the Error of his Paſſion. A wiſe man will watch over his Paſſion, and learn of *Socrates*, who ſaid once to his Servant offending, *Were I not angry, I ſhould ſtrike thee.*

8 It was
done in my
Childhood.

8. A third comes and makes the ſame Plea too, and ſaith, I was not my ſelf neither, was but young, a *Child* in comparison, and did as a Child: And Childhood and Youth are Vanity, and muſt have a time to ſow their Wild Oats. But hath not God written bitter things againſt many for the ſins of their youth? Two and forty Children paid dear for their Childiſh Impiety, and deriding the Prophet, being torn in pieces by two Bears. *Job* and *David* ſmarted ſore for their ſins in youth: And *Zophar* tells us excellently, how ſuch ſins will come home to a man in his age, and lie down with him in his ſick-bed, and break his very Bones; as thoſe Bruiſes that are taken in Youth, are felt uſually in Age. And he that ſhall read *St. Auſtin's* Con-

teſſions,

Job 13.

26.

2 Kings 1.

23.

Psalm 17 7.

Job 20 7.

essions, and see how oft in many Chapters Conf 1 2.
 he is up with a Piece of Waggersy (as we c. 5. 6. 7.
 would call it) robbing an Orchard of 8. 9.
 some green Apples; and with what Circumstances he doth aggravate it, and arraign himself for it; how he doth lament it, and beg pardon at the hands of God; will, I hope, learn not to allow in himself, or in his Children, any Childish miscarriages. I and my Companions rose in the Night (saith he) stole Apples more than they could tell what to do withal, no very pleasant Apples neither, nor did he it for want, but wantonness, *nulla causa malitie nisi malitia*, and how merry they were, and how much they laughed when they had done all, which he doth punctually set down, and particularly bewail.

9. Another begs your Excuse, for he 3. H. good
 hath no other fault in all the world, but N. 1. 12.
 that he is of *so good a nature*. Thus must all be excused first or last. One excused himself but even now from his *Ill Nature*; and now a *Good Nature* is the onely crime: He is of *so good a nature*, that he can say *as body nay*; he is *no mans foe* but his own. speak him but fair, and you may have his very heart. But I say then, 1. How comes he to say God nay? Or is he no body with him? *Reuben* and *Zedekiah*, the first

and last Kings of *Judah*, were two such good-natured men; and the one lost ten Tribes by his good nature, the other all. *Rehoboam* could not find in his heart to say the Youngsters nay, he was so tender-hearted, as he is said, 2 *Chron.* 13. 7. And the other spake it out in plain *English* to his Lords and Courtiers, desiring him to secure *Jeremy*, or put him to death; I leave *Jer.* 38. 4. him to you, for *the King is not he that can do anything against you*. Yet both of these could say God nay. *Rehoboam* could say the wise Grandees of State nay: And *Zedekiah* could say *Jeremy* the Prophet nay, with whom he had many a Conference. 2. *You may have his heart* you say) if you speak him fair; you need but to hold up your Finger, he will do what you would have him. A mighty good nature sure! How comes it then to pass, that let the Lord or his Ministers speak never so fair, intreat, perswade, beseech; or let the Lord lift up his hand in way of Judgment, he yields not, — *Cereus in vitium flecti*. His evil Companions have him at a beck, they desire him, he becomes bound, and is surety for his Friend: But *Solomon* calls him a fool for his labor; *A man void of understanding striketh hands and becometh surety, &c.*

3. Is it so small a matter to be *no bodier* foe but his own? Yet 1. It cannot be said so of such. This fool pulls down his House with his great good nature and little wit. Patrimony is sold and spent, Wife and Children undone, by this good nature. And will any man open his mouth to plead for such? The Heathen will rise up against him, and condemn him. *If any provide not for his own, specially those of his Household, (his own Flesh and Blood) he is worse than* Tim. 5. *an Infidel*: Yea, such have not onely un- 8. christened and unmanned themselves, but have unnatured themselves by this good nature. Monsters you may call them, and worse than Monsters. *The Sea-monsters* Lam. 4. 3. *draw out their Breasts*, and have a tender care of their young; but these sweet-natured Souls are like *the Ostrich in the Wilderness*, the right Emblem of improvident and unnatural Parents; she leaves her Eggs to their chance, and is *hardned against* Job 39. *her young ones, as if they were not hers.* — 15, 16. *She is without fear, &c.* Or, 2. If it were granted, such were no mans foe but their own, were this so light a matter? The whole Creation, as one Man, would rise up against such, and condemn them; it being the common and first Principle that Nature hath implanted in every Animal,

Self-preservation; and the second is like to this (the very next Impression of Nature stamped upon the heart of every living Creature) is the preservation of those that come of them. And from these two Principles, no Creature but Man onely (no Man but the unnatural) can be enticed, or any way corrupted to act against them. In a word, that Man hath no good nature at all, who is not good-natured to himself. *He that is wise, is wise for himself*, saith the Wiseman: And he that loves another, must first love himself, which is to be the measure and stint of my love to another.—*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self*, next to thy self. Religion doth not destroy self-love, but direct it, that we love not our selves inordinately, our selves solely. Oh that the World were more full of this true self-love than it is! Then should we not have cause to complain of so many ill Husbands, and worse Christians, who are neither true to God, nor themselves, nor their nearest Friends, but injurious to all. They wrong God and Religion, which should be honoured by them; wrong their King and Countrey, which should be supported by them; wrong their Families, which should be upheld and provided for by them; and most of all injurious

Prov 9.
12.

rious to their own Souls, which (after Wife and Children undone here) are eternally undone by them. And will any henceforward give in this for an Excuse any more?

10. I was in Jest, saith another; and a little harmless Mirth is not to be blamed. 10. I was in jest.
True, if harmless. Honest Mirth doth good like a Medicine, Prov. 17. 22. *Is a continual Feast, Prov. 15. 15.* The Scripture alloweth (yea commandeth) rejoycing in the Lord. *Rejoyce in the Lord alway, Phil. 4. 4.* But there is a Laughter which is called Madness, *Eccles. 2. 3.* and is the proper Cognizance of the Fool, *Eccles. 2. 6.* And Solomon observeth, There is a man who playeth mad reaks, *casts about firebrands, arrows, and death,* abusive Jests, and unhandsome actions, and puts off all with this, *Am not I in sport?* Excellently our English Lyrick,

Prov. 16.
18, 19.

*Make not thy sport abuses; for the Fly
That feeds on Dung, is coloured thereby.
Pick out of mirth as stones out of thy ground,
Profaneness, filthiness, abusiveness;
These are the scum with which course Wits
abound, &c.*

How dear did the Israelites pay for their mad holiday mirth, when they were eating, drinking, and dancing about their new Puppet?

- Exod. 31.
 28. Puppet? It cost the lives of three thousand, executed by Gods appointment. Nor may we forget how those poor Children were destroyed for their scurrilous Song, and jeering the holy Prophet. Nor had the
 2 Kings 1.
 24. *Philistims* any cause to brag of their mirth at last, who were all gathered together to see blind *Sampson* make them sport, to
 Judges 16.
 27, 30. make them laugh; the Play-house fell down upon their heads, and slew three thousand upon the place. *In their beat* (saith the Lord, speaking of the *Chaldeans*) *I will make their Feast, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoyce, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not awake.*
 Jer. 51. 39. A sad Reckoning, a sad Feast, a sad Drinking, a sad Sleep; sad all. So it fell out to
 2 Sam. 13.
 28. *Belshazzar*, so to *Amnon*, and so to many a one since, who have been cut off in the midst of their Cups and Merriment.

11. I did
 against my
 will. II. But he that can say, I did such a thing *against my will*, thinks he hath said enough for his excuse. Then might *Pilate* after washing his hands, been clear of the Blood of Christ, whom with much reluctance he gave Sentence against, at the Peoples restless instigation: And *Peter* might have spared his Tears, after the denial of his Master. But awakened Conscience is not so to be stilled, or lulled asleep. In the

Law

Law it was appointed, That he who had shed Blood unwittingly, and against his will, was to run for it to the City of Refuge; And we must to Christ, to have Ignorances and Overlights pardoned, or die. Deut. 19.
 How bitterly did *Origen* bewail his Lapse, though never so much against his will he had been drawn to Sacrifice. And in our *English Martyrology* we read of several who, against their will and Conscience, had, to save their Lives, abjured, recanted, or promised Submission and Conformity to the then Church-Practices, that afterwards had no rest day nor night, till they had revoked those Recantations, and submitted themselves to any kind of sufferings, rather than so to smother Conscience. Euseb. l. 7.

12. Another lays the blame on Necessity, and thinks that (as it is above all Law) so above all Exception. *Ingens Telum*. Necessity justifies many acts, never sin. Otherwise the Martyrs were all out, who to preserve their Consciences pure, gave up all, and loved not their lives unto the death, Rev. 12. 11. But this was the Plea of the Unjust Steward, What shall I do? My Master is turning me off; Dig I cannot, Beg I will not, Starve I must not; of necessity I must strike in with my Masters Debtors, though to his prejudice, and make sure of some- Mr. Thomas Whitelock, James Abbot, Thomas Benbridge.

somewhat to take to. A necessity of his own making. There is never any necessity of sinning. Sin often brings men into necessities; no necessity can ever bring a man out of sin.

13. *Besides my intention.*

Prov. 5. 8.

13. Among other frivolous Excuses, this is one also: It was *besides my intention*; little did I dream this or that would have followed, I was drawn in. But we should remember those frequent *Items*, *Come not near her corner*: Shun occasions: *Abstain from appearance of evil*, 1 *Thess.* 5. 21. Keep to thy Calling, and ways, and so keep thee off the Devils ground, (as he said once of a Maid that he took possession of, finding her at a Stage-play) and out of his Circle. We find by experience, the coldest Water becomes hot, being a while over the Fire; and the hardest Ice soon begins to thaw, being near the Heat. The beginning of many Evils (as well as Contention) is like the letting out of Water out of the Banks, or kindling of a Fire; who knows where either may stay? Therefore the

Prov. 17. 14. Wise mans Counsel is, *Cease before it be meddled with*: *q. d.* Make an end before thou begin. Full little did *Dinah* think her Visit in Civility or Curiosity would have occasioned her deflowring: And as little did *Shechem* think that deflowring would

would have cost so much Blood. And it is like *Aaron* never thought of making the Calf, when he asked their Earrings. But undoubtedly it was the furthest end of *St. Peter's* thought to deny his Master, when he entred the High Priests Palace, which he had so solemnly protested against. But we may see we are no more our own, when once out of our way. Yet is this observable to our present Case: This holy man never went about to excuse his crime, by saying it was besides his intention; *but he went out and wept bitterly, Matth. 26. 75.*

14. Nor are they a few who think to come off with this; *My fear betrayed me,* ^{14. I was surprised} that I knew not what I said or did. *The wish fear,* ^{wish fear.} *fear of man* (as *Solomon* observes) *causeth many a snare, Prov. 29. 25.* And a cruel Tyrant it is, and too like that false Harlot spoken of in another place, that hath cast ^{Prov. 7.} *down many wounded,* yea many strong ones ^{26.} have fallen under her hands: Witness *Abraham, Isaac, David, Peter, Cranmer, &c.* Saints all of the first Magnitude: Yet this is nevertheless a sin, and to be bewailed. Nor do such Examples excuse, but condemn us the more, if we think to have our sin Patronized by their Example: *Bis peccat, qui exempli peccat:* He sins twice, that sins by anothers example. We should guard

guard our hearts against this base fear of Man, with the awful dread of him who is able to destroy Soul and Body in Hell; and consider whether it be not a more fearful thing *to fall into the hands of the living God*, than of a Man that shall die, and the Son of Man which is *but a Worm*. Then would this Divine fear quite destroy those false fears, as *Aaron's Rod* devoured those false and imaginary Rods, and prevent those Storms and Floods, or Flames of horror, which the over-prevailing fear of Man hath betrayed us unto; witness those notable Examples and Champions of Christ, *Peter and Cranmer*, and many other shrinking Professors, who not till after much bitter Repentance, flying to Christ, obtained mercy. And that of miserable *Spira* is never to be forgotten, who though he so repented and bewailed this sin, that he was swallowed up of sorrow, yet never gained peace, or so much as the least glimpse of hope, but died in extreme despair.

15. It was
for a mat-
ter of mo-
ment.

15. Sometimes this is given in for Excuse; It was not for a trifle, but for a *matter of moment*; my Liveliness depends on it, as *Demetrius* pleaded for his Silver Shrines. It was for a Prize, saith another, that which might make me and mine for ever.

ever. I saw (said Achan) a Wedge of Gold, a rich Babylonish Garment, and two hundred Shekels of Silver, and none was by to discover it, and who would not put the Curse to the venture on such terms? But Gold may be bought too dear, as our Proverb saith. It proved, as all such Cheats do, *Aurum Tbolosatum*, accursed Gold; it consumed Achan and all his house. *Si violandum est Jus, Regni Causa violandum est*, &c. was the saying of an elder than Machiavel: If a Kingdom lie at stake, there can be no foul play to win it: A Crown wipes off all blots, and excuseth all Crimes, *tam patrata, quam patranda*, already committed, or to be committed, as Alexander thought, when he trusted up a pedling Pyrate that took now and then a Barque, when himself, as he was told by the same Pyrate, exercised an universal Piracy and Robbery by Sea and Land, and cried, *Have at all*; yet did he reckon his Name should be recorded in the Books of Fame.

O tandem major parcas Insane minori.

And of this Religion was Jeroboam, who, to get and keep the Crown, thinks Conscience must not be too strait laced. *Rem si possis recte, si non quocunque modo rem, or regnum*

regnum rather. Kingdoms are to be gotten, governed, kept, by other Arts than other private States are. Therefore to get the Crown, he waits the opportunity of a Rupture, then makes his advantage of it, to set his Master aside: And when got the Crown, he sets Religion to sale, erects a new Model of Worship, substitutes another sort of Clergy-men, such as should thoroughly comply; and outs all of their Ministerial Employment, that were of Gods appointment. But it is a Golden Saying of *Solomon*, and worthy of a Christian Princes *Motto* in his Coin, *Justitia firmat Thronum*, The Throne is established by Righteousness. This turned to the utter ruine of *Jeroboam* and his whole House. So likewise those wise Master-Builders, to make the House stand the surer, must needs pull out the *Head Corner-stone*, lest the *Romans* should come and take away their Place, Dignity, and Nation; all lay then at stake, as they then thought: But did they not thereby pull an old House on their own Heads; or rather, as our Saviour said, pull a Stone upon them, which hath ground them and their Nation to Powder? This brought on those very *Romans* which they feared, and hastned on the Abomination of Desolation, which they never feared.

Prov. 16.
11.

16. Another makes this his Excuse; It was to cover his shame. This was that set the Son of Jesse awork, after that foul Act with Bathsheba; Uriah must be sent for home; if that will not do, made drunk; if that, and nothing else, he must be sent to his long home. Alas, poor *Bethleemite*! Thou saidst thou wast once in a great strait, when of three Judgments thou must chuse one; but never in such a strait as now. Repentance had been thy onely Remedy. Thou consultedst shame to thy House; and that which thou didst contrive to smother it, made it break out at the House top, and proclaimed it in the sight of the Sun. How well had it been with thee, if thou hadst knocked down the first rise of the Tentation with thy Daughter *Tamars* detestation, *As for me, whither shall I cause my shame to go?* Thou hadst then prevented those Tragical Calamities that after befel thee and thy Family. Yet alas! how ordinary is it for men to seek to cover shame with sin, and to hide a less, run into a greater sin, which will be sure to find them out, and lay them open at last? As in case of Robbery, to conceal the Theft, Murder is committed; and often after one Murder committed, a second or a third follows; as if Blood could be covered with

16. To cover shame

2 Sam.
13. 13.

D

Blood.

Blood. And in the case of *Bastardy*, how dreadful, yet how ordinary is it for the unnatural Parents, set on by the instigation of the Devil, to lay violent hands on their own innocent Births! Thereby making that sin, which was bad enough before, (yet pardonable) now a crimson sin, and unpardonable. Many Publicans and Harlots have repented and found mercy: but Blood is a crying sin, and calls for Vengeance. Murderer is the Devils first Title, *John* 8. 44. But with what fearful aggravations is this *Infanticidium*, murder of Infants, over-charged above any other almost? Murder of any kind is dreadful; but wilful and deliberate, much more. The casual murder might, the wilful might not be pardoned: But to murder an Innocent, that could never wrong any, what barbarous Inhumanity this! And if any in the world may be called Innocents, Infants most properly. Yet to do this with thy own hands, who art the Father or Mother, and oughtest by the Law of Nature to preserve thy Young, Tygres and Bears will rise up against thee, and condemn thee. This is an act of so deep a dye, that no words can set it out with horror enough: An act not onely barbarous and inhumane, but an unnatural, and in a good sense

Numb. 35.
31.

sense I may call it an *unbrutish* act. This worse than thy former sin: Thy Fornication was a brutish, this a devilish act. Yee alas! how doth Satan hurry on these poor Creatures from sin to sin, bearing them in hand this is the onely way for security and secrecie? Whereas this is that which makes all break out, and that with a vengeance too. The onely way had been to *flie to that fountain opened for sin and uncleanness*, *Zach. 13. 1.* and to go into the lowest Form of humble Penitents, as did that noted sinful Creature once, who had not the confidence to look Christ in the face, but came behind him, and, not presuming to touch his head, washed his feet with her penitential tears, (the best Pattern in the world for such Offenders) who had such acceptance, that her Saviour said to her, *Her sins that were many were forgiven her.* Luke 7. 38. This is the onely way: All other ways and deeds of darkness will be brought to light, and then the shame thou wouldest avoid, will come home with a double measure of guilt and horror. Oh that all such would well consider that fearful *Woe* denounced against such sin-coverings, *Isa. 30. 1, 2.* *Woe to the rebellious Children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me, and cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add*

The great Sin of Excuses.

add sin to sin. This dreadful Woe will certainly pursue and overtake such kind of Offenders, of whose Practice it is so lively a description. 1. After such foul sins of Murder, Whoredom, &c. there is nothing but *taking counsel* and devising how to keep it close: They consult with Flesh and Blood, consult with Sin and Satan: *They take counsel, but not of me, saith the Lord.* 2. *They cover with a Covering.*] That is all which is desired, not a Cure but a Cover, not a Pardon, but a palliating and cloaking of Sin: This way is thought of, and that way, and a Covering they must have, but *not of my Spirit*; of the evil Spirit therefore it must needs be. So 3. *They add sin to sin*, which is the third thing noted, and worst of all: They enquire not how lawful, but, will it cover shame? That is all they look after: Sin is nothing with them, and sin upon sin, and wrath upon wrath; their onely business is how to keep off shame. Those two Harlots, 1 *Kings* 3. were Saints to these Miscreants, who both strove for the living Child, neither would own the dead Child.

17. *It was
not my all
but others.*

17. There be divers others who think they need no Excuse; as first, He who says, *It was not his all, but others.* But hadst thou no hand in it at all by Counsel, Consent,

sent, or Privity? Thou maist be the Principal, when others are the Actors. Was not he charged with the Blood of *Uriah*, who was at that time many a Mile off; not slain by his hand, but by the hand of the Children of *Ammon*? There be many ways whereby men may be guilty of other mens sins; eight, the principal, are comprised in that old Distich,

Consulo, Præcipio, Consentio, Provoeco, Laudo;
Non retego culpam, non punio, non reprehendo.

Counsel, Command, Consent, Provoke, Commend;
Not publish, punish, or not reprehend.

1. *Counsel*. Thus was *Jonadab* foully guilty of the deflowring of *Tamar*, when he gave *Amnon* those Instructions how to accomplish his Incestuous Lust. ^{2 Sam. 13.}

2. *Command*. Thus *Absalom* guilty of *Amnon's* Blood, who gave Command to his Servants to set upon him, and assassinate him at his Table; *Have not I commanded you?* ^{2 Sam. 13.}

3. *Consent*. Thus *Saul* guilty of the Blood of *Steven*, though he cast not one stone at him, onely held the Garments of them who did it. ^{Act. 8. 1.}

2 Kings
9. 25.

4. *Provoke.* Thus the Blood of *Naboth* is charged on *Jezabel*, and all the Villanies of *Abah*, because she stirred him up, and egged him on.

5. *Commend.* They that forsake the Law, praise the wicked; but such as keep the Law, contend with them, Prov. 28. 4. They who commend and approve an evil fact, whether before or *post factum*, are equally guilty. Had not old *Jacob* shewed his detestation of his Sons cruelty and perfidiousness towards the *Shechemites*, he had been as faulty as they.

Gen. 37.
2.

6. *Not to publish*, or discover. The Counsel-keeper is as bad as the Counsel-giver. If a Soul sin, and bear the voyce of swearing, and is a witness whether he have seen, or otherwise known of it, if he do not utter it, he shall bear his iniquity, Lev. 5. 1. By this means *Joseph*, when a Youth of seventeen years of age, cleared himself of his Brethrens faults, by bringing to his Father their evil report.

Judges 10.
48.

7. *Not to punish* those that do amiss, when under our Jurisdiction. Thus the whole Tribe of *Benjamin*, when Justice was demanded against those Sons of *Belial* in *Gibeab*, that committed that outrage upon the *Levite* and his Concubine, made their sin their own, and were almost totally cut

cut off for it. Thus those indulgent Parents who, instead of correcting their Childrens misdemeanours, say not so much as *Why dost thou so?* or onely, *Nay my Sons,* ^{1 Kings} do no more so; soon find their Children ^{1. 6.} to become Thorns in their Sides, and Pricks ^{1 Sam 1.} in their Eyes, and are both alike sinful, the ^{24.} one by omission, the other by commission; and then God first visits the sins of the Fathers upon the Children, by their misdemeanours; and after visits the sins of the Children upon the Fathers, by their affliction.

8. Lastly, *Not to reprove*, is another way making us Partakers of others sins. A duty as oft pressed as any other, *Eph. 5. 11. Have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but reprove them. Lev. 19. 17. Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke him, and not suffer sin upon him.* No Duty more beneficial, none more neglected. There be many Censurers, or Backbiters; few Reprovers: Many Flatterers, few faithful Reprovers. Rare to find a Man that will give a Reproof, as rare to find the Man will take it, Whereas there is no surer Evidence of true Love, than to give a Reproof; nor surer Evidence of true Grace, than to take it. Many have had cause to bless God for a

Reproof seasonably given, *Prov. 6.13. They are the way of life.* St. *Austin* gives two Instances of the happy success of a Reproof: The one given by himself to *Alipius*, thereby reclaimed from his haunting the Theatre and Plays: The other by a Taunt and Check given to his Mother *Monica*, thereby reclaimed from her Tippling and Gossiping. But whosoever fails in this Duty, the Minister must not. The chief part, I may say, of his Work lies in this, *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Be instant, Reprove, Rebuke.* Two words; Do it once, do it again. The Reproving and Convincing Ministry is commonly the most Successful Ministry.

2 Tim. 4.

1. 2.

Key for

EXIT 401-

607.

18. I did

it in my

zeal.

18. And the next man thinks he needs no Excuse, but rather Applause; for what he did was out of *pure Zeal*, and the fervor of his Spirit. But what was this thy Zeal? was it in a good matter, or against an evil? Then thy Zeal is just. But if in an ill matter, or ill manner, or to an ill end, it loseth its praise, and becomes vicious. *Saul* had Zeal enough, such as it was, when in his zeal to the House of *Israel* he cut off the *Gibeonites*, which caused many of his House to be cut off. *Jehu* wanted no Zeal against the House of *Abab*; but it was for a selfish end. Nor they who cast out their Brethren

2 Sam. 21.

2.

2 Kings

10. 16.

Brethren (for no crime, but) for his name
 sake : For they said, God should be glorified, and the Church purged thereby. But
 most of all excessive was he, who, when
 time was, thought he was bound to persecute all that called on the Name of Christ,
 and compelled the Believers to abjure, blaspheme, or fly for it : What in one
 place he saith of himself, *I was exceeding zealous*, Gal. 1. 14. In another he saith,
Being more then exceeding mad, Acts 26. 11.
 And this was the righter name for such intemperate zeal : Zeal, we say, is a *mixed passion*, compounded of Love and Anger ;
 but if it have not also a mixture of Piety and Charity, of Prudence and Moderation,
 it becomes a bitter Purge, and causeth sad Distempers both in the Spirit and Church.
 Therefore St. James calls it *bitter zeal*, James 3. 14. We render it *Envy* ; but
 when it is bitter, it is put among the works of the Flesh, Gal. 5. 20. and joyned
 with Strife, Contention, Division, as in many places of Scripture ; then call it not
Naomi, but *Marah* ; for it becomes like that bitter Star called *Wormwood* in the
 Revelations, which falling from Heaven, and burning like a Lamp for a while ;
 where it fell, it embittered all, and turned the Waters into Wormwood, that whoso
 drank

Bl. 66. 5. 1

Acts 24. 5.

Rom. 13.

13.

1 Cor. 3.

3. & 13. 4.

2 Cor. 12.

20.

Jam 3. 14.

Rev. 8. 10,

11.

drank of them died : This was ζήλος πικρός, bitter zeal indeed.

19. It is
my Conscience,
exc.

19. A third comes with like confidence, and thinks he needs no Excuse ; for he acts according to his Conscience, and that will bear him out. And there are many make this Plea : As,

1. Many will desire their harsh Censures, and harsher carriage towards others, with whom they differ in matters of Opinion about Religion, by reason of their different Education, Interest, Apprehension, &c. saying, They judge themselves bound in conscience so to do : And of this we may say, — *Isiacos intra muros peccatur & extra*. Thus it is all the World over : In the Church, and out of the Church. Thus the Jew of old hated and anathematized the Samaritan, and the Samaritan did the like to him again : The difference was about the Mode, the Place, and the Temple or Mountain of Worship. The Jew said, No place but *Jerusalem* ; the other was for Mount *Girizim* : but so wide the difference, That Jew and Samaritan had nothing to do one with the other. *Joh. 4. 9.* And when they called Christ Samaritan, they thought they call'd him by as bad a Name as when they called him Devil. The Jew now hates the Christian, and the passionate

Joh. 8. 48.

passionate Christian him as much: The Mahometan both: And the Papist the Protestant. And which is saddest of all, *Fuoris nostri calamitas*: There are unkind differences among Protestants, and from thence bitter Invectives, hard Censures, opprobrious Language, dreadful Heart-burnings, and lamentable Separations, and distances one from another.

Quantum Religio potuit suadere malorum!

But alas! if Religion, Piety, Charity, Conscience, or any of them were rightly understood, this need not be, *Tros Tyriusve*, &c. Let him be Jew, Turk, Papist, Pagan, Barbarian, Scythian; I must speak ill of no Man, wrong no man, call no man Common or Unclean; but seek the good of all, and walk inoffensively to all. Our Saviour came to take down partition Walls: It is Satan who sets them up; neither do they serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Bellies, who cause and keep up Divisions among Christians.

2. Another pleads Conscience too, and saith, I am under a Vow: So pleaded those obstinate Jews against Jeremy, Jer. 44. 16.

3. After

3. An
Oath.

Mark 6.
26.

4. A Curse.

Acts 13.
14.

1 Sam. 25.
22. & 31.

20. It is
but a small
Sin.

3. After him comes another and saith, I have taken a solemn *Oath* : Thus reason'd *Herod*, when he took off *John Baptist's* Head.

4. And after them, come others and say, But we have bound our selves under an *Oath and Curse* too : So alledged those bloody Enemies of *Paul*, That they would neither Eat nor Drink, till they had killed *Paul* : But neither the one, or other, or any thing else can bind to Sin. It is a resolved Maxim in Divinity, *Injusta vincula rumpit Justitia*, Unlawful Promises, Vows or Oaths, are lawfully broken. And *David's* Example is remarkable, who having in heat of blood made an Oath, and that with an Imprecation annexed, God do so to me, and more also, if I be not revenged on *Nabal*; yet when *Abigail* came to perswade him. he retracted his Oath, blessed God and her, and her good Counsel, and proceeded no further in his intended Self-Revenge.

20. Again, others come with this Excuse, It was but a *small Sin*, a venial Pccadillo; If I never do worse, I hope I shall do well; as to tell an officious Lye, to swear in Passion, or by Faith and Troth, by Heaven, or by my Hand, &c. But is there any least Commandment : Though we have a saying

aying of humane Laws, they take no notice of many petty Offences, yet *De minimis curat Lex Divina*, He that breaks one of the least of God's Commandments, and teacheth so, is least in the Kingdom of Heaven. The Law of God takes notice of Adultery and Murder in the eye and thought, and of the idle word: Tho little sins unrepented of, prove the most dangerous Sins. The *Small Pox* kills more year by year, then are usually swept away with the raging Pestilence. The gathering of a few sticks on the Sabbath might be looked upon as a small Offence, yet God commanded the Sabbath-Breaker should be stoned. Mat. 5:19.
Num. 15:35.

And the stealing of a few Apples, when by a Child, you would think should never trouble a mans thoughts after; yet doth St. *Augustin* more then once confess and bewail it. And saith, *Qui modica spernit paulatim decidit*; He that scruples not small Sins, knows not where he shall stop.

21. It was the first time, saith another: 21. The I did so but once. Answer, And too much of that. *Adam* offended but once, nor *Achan*, nor *Gebazi*, nor he that gathered Sticks on the Sabbath, nor he that cursed, Lev. 24. 14. Yet how were they punished! *Judas* betrayed his Master but once, and despaired:

dispaired: *Cain* committed one Murder and accursed: *David* for one act of Adultery, how visited!

22. It is
all the
fault I
have.

22. I have *but this one fault* in all the World: Abate me but this, and I ask no favour. I hope if the Lord would have spared *Sodom*, if there lacked five of the fifty first demanded, he will not destroy me for lack of one: But this was our Saviour's

Mark 10.

22.

Jam. 1. 10.

answer to the young man, *One thing thou lackest*. And St. *James* resolves the case, *He that keeps the whole Law, and fails in one point, is guilty of all*: One Disease may as well kill as twenty. Pluck out this right Eye of thine, if that be it which makes thee to offend, our Saviour Commandeth.

1 Kings

11. 15.

One *Hadad* escaping, when all the males in *Edom* were destroyed, created *Solomon* much disturbance. And one only *Jeboash* escaping hid, when the whole Line was destroyed, wiped *Athaliah* of the Crown: so may one hid sin deprive thee of Heaven: The right Christian must be an *Universalist*. Such is God's Command, *All or none*, Deut.

2 Kings

11. 152.

11. 32. Such is the Christians engagement, *All and every one*, Acts 10. 33. The *Dolus*, the Hypocrisie here lies in a particular, when sincerity manifests it self in the general.

Dolus latet in particularibus, sinceritas patet in universalibus.

23. But

23. But it was to prevent a great danger, and to *save my life*; and who would not strain hard in such a case! Life is sweet, I confess, and would be preserved by all lawful means. This was the Plea of the *Gibeonites*, when, to prevent that impending Storm, they used those Wiles, and framed those Lies, *We were afraid for our Lives*, say they, *and have done this*. Their lives they saved indeed, but escaped not the Curse, and were adjudged to perpetual slavery for their collusion and dissembling.

23. It was to save my life,

Josh. 9!
24.

24. Another looks to be excused for his *Negatives*, and applauds himself for his negative goodness: He is neither Whore nor Thief, &c. And as to Religion, neither Athiest nor Papist, Anabaptist, or other Sectary: But what art thou in the mean time, as to the practise and power of godliness? It may be an ignorant Protestant, liveless Professor, a proud self-conceited *Laodicean*, a regardless *Gallia*, a halting *Jehu*, a painted Sepulcher. Thy state may be applauded by men, but remember that of our Saviour, *Luke 16. 15. That which is highly esteemed of men, may be abomination with God.* Deest aliquid ritus, There is one thing needful, and that one thing thou lackest: The somewhat that is positive. An hundred

24. Negative goodness.

hundred Cyphers make not so much as one Figure; And *two Negatives* in Divinity, nay, put in twenty, make not *one Affirmative*. In plain English, thy case is naught; thou art not yet one step Heaven-ward, but one step from Hell: The first step from Hell is, *Cease to do evil*. The first step to Heaven is, *Learn to do well*, Esay 1. 16. The Scripture joyns Affirmatives and Negatives together, and they must not be parted, Rom. 13. 13, 14. *Not in Chambering and Wantonness, &c.* But *put on the Lord Jesus*. There ye have both, Tit. 2. 11, 12. *The grace of God teacheth us to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts; there is the Negative: And to live soberly, righteously and godly, there is the Affirmative.* It is very observable, That in the last Judgment described, *Matth. 25*. The *Venite*, or absolution, *Come ye blessed*; Runs all upon the *Affirmative*, *Ye gave me Meat, Drink, Clothing, Visits, &c.* And the Sentence of *Condemnation* runs all upon the *Negative*, *No Meat, no Drink, &c.* The truth is, no man goes to Hell, but for want of Positives and Affirmatives.

Mal. 3. 10.

25. Many
good
deeds.

25. And now comes in another, and takes hold of what I said last, and thinks I have made his Excuse for him: For though, saith he, I am a great Sinner; yet for the *good parts* God hath bestowed on me, and for

for the *good Duties*, and the many other *good things* I perform; setting the one against the other, I may not only pass excusable, but gain an Approbation. Thus that vile Strumpet thought to pass with her Devotions: She had been confessed, absolved, done her Penance, paid her Vows, therefore might sin afresh. Thus the Pharisee, when he had made a prey of a poor Widow, thinks his sin expiated by a long Prayer, which he meant to say ere he went to Bed. And thus, I fear, do many Professors now a-days, for whom my Heart bleeds; who, like the *Int-Keeper*, cleanse their Rooms in the Morning, to be fouled again by all Comers ere Night: Or like the *Monks*, who have their *Mattins* and *Even-song*, and all day do what they list, only with this difference; The one mock God, in saying what they understand not; And the other deceive themselves in plain English, praying that which they after mind not. But as one said once, Tell me not what the man is in Affliction, but what after: So say I, Tell me not what a man is in Duty, but what after it.

Again, there are others who think to expiate their many Sins in their Life, by doing some notable act of Charity at their Death, by their Goods ill gotten. Debts

E

are

Prov. 7.

14.

Mat. 23.

14.

are to be paid before Legacies; and Restitution is to go before Charity, as we see in *Zachar.* We speak not against good works, but would have them done in a good manner, that they may redound to the good of the Donor. Many rich men once cast in great Gifts into the Treasury, and all did not amount to one Farthing: The poor Widow call in no more, and all theirs was not so much. God hates Robbery for *Burns-Offering*, and the price of a Dog, or the hire of a Harlot, was not to come into his Offering. Remarkable is that story of *Salinus* the First, who, near his end, was counselled by *Pyrrhus* the Bassa, to lay out a great mass of Treasure, taken from *Persian* Merchants, upon a notable Hospital for the Poor; No, saith he, God forbid I should bestow those Goods so ill gotten, upon Works of Charity and Devotion, for mine own vain-glory and praise: I will never do it, but command, that they be all restored to the right Owners. It is true indeed, wicked men may do some magnificent acts, much cryed up by men, yet nothing available to the Doer. What a splendid Temple was that which *Herod* built, *Josephus* saith, Not much inferior, if any thing at all, to that built by *Solomon*: far beyond that built by *Cyrus* and *Darius*. *Tacitus* calls

Esay 61.

8.

Deut. 23.

18.

calls it, *Immensa opulentie Templum*; yet
be as very a Miscreant as ever breathed.

26. I may not forget the vulgar Excuse 26. Fair
of many ignorant persons, *Their fair inside, inside, and*
and good heart. Charge them with their gross *good heart.*
Ignorance, neglect of God's Service in Fa-
mily, or otherwise, loose and lewd talk, &c.
They are ready to answer, Though I can't
talk so well, and have not so much know-
ledge; yet for *a Heart to God-ward*, I have
as good as the best: I have so strong a
Faith, as I never yet doubted; and for lo-
ving God, I do, and ever did *with all my*
heart. Poor Souls, thy Heart good with-
out knowledge, is as an Eye good without
sight, *Prov. 19, 2.* Tell me thou hast a
strong Faith, and a Heart full of love to
God, when thy life and talk is loose and
vain; and perswade me thou hearest Thun-
der, when I see it snows: The one is not
more the old man's wonder, then this the
Christians, Or that the Spring is sweet,
when the water's bitter; Or that the Tree
is a Pear-tree, when it beareth Bramble-
Berries; Or that the man is sound, who is
alway Coughing in my Ears, and spits up
his Lungs and putrid matter in my sight.
As is the Treasure of the Heart, such is the
Communcation and Conversation: Tell
this to thy Child, not to me. Thy Child

would perswade thee, he loves thee with all his heart, and will strike on his Breast when thou askest him, Where he loves thee; yet let him have an Apple, ask him to give it, or a part of it; or bid him go into the next Room, if dark, to fetch thee any thing, he shrinks and shrugs, but will do neither. So if the Lord bid thee part with the least sin, or go into the darks of seriousness, and mortifying any lust; thou slingest away, and wilt do neither. And now tell me, whose Speech and Carriage is more Childish, thine or his?

27. *Little did I think* it. 27. In the last place comes in one, who saith, *Little did I think*; and we may soon discern whose Language this is, *Insipientis est, &c.* Even the greatest Fool hath his after-wit, and after-repentance: Had I been aware, or were it to do again, I would do otherwise. Thus it is in Temporals, thus in Spirituals; thus in this Life, thus after. Who would have thought, saith the *Prodigal*, that I should ever come to beg a morsel of Bread? That did I, may the provident man say. Who would have thought, said *Haman* and *Jezabel*, that we should have come to such ends? We never expected other, say the godly, but that so proud a Wretch should have a shameful downfall; and that a Whore, a Witch, a Murderer should

should come to an infamous end. Who would have thought, said the foolish Builder, that such a storm should have come, and on such a sudden? And the foolish Virgins, that the Bridegroom should surprise us, that we had not time to trim our Lamps? That did we, say the wise Builder and wise Virgin, and we provided against both. Who would have thought, saith *Dives*, there had been such a place of Torments, and that I should after all my Ease and Plenty, have come hither, and that I should see *Lazarus* taken into Heaven, and my self shut out? What did *Moses* and the Prophets tell thee other, saith *Abraham*? And who would think, saith the careless Professor, at the last day, that I Mat. 8. 12. should see *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, in the Kingdom of God, and so many of the Children of the Kingdom, so many Professors, cast into utter darkness? That did I forewarn you of, may our Saviour then Luke 13. say. It is a remarkable passage that in *Wisd. 5. 3. 4. 5.* Where the prophane Atheist and Scoffer are brought in condemning themselves: *We Fools counted the life of the Godly madness, and his end without honour: And now is he reckon'd among the Sons of God, and his Inheritance is among the Saints. How have we erred from the Truth,*

&c. What hath all our Pride, and all our Riches and Glory profited us, seeing they are vanisht and gone, &c.

Thus have we done with the first sort of Excuses, those we called *Home-bred*; or from our selves; we come now to those that we call *Foreign*, or borrowed from others.

CHAP. III.

Excuses taken from Others.

EXcuses taken from Others, are either from, 1. *Men.* 2. *God.* 3. *Satan.* We shall begin with those relating to men: And to take in all sorts of men, shall reduce them into three Classes. 1. All men may be considered as *Superiors, Equals* or *Inferiours.* 2. As *good* or *bad.* 3. As *Friends, Foes* or *Strangers.*

1. The first sort of men from whom Excuses are taken, are *Superiors*; and from such many are often taken. As 1. From their *Example.* If Parents, Masters, Ministers, or Princes, do so or so; It is authority enough for Inferiours to do the same. Man is a Creature, much led by Example:

And

1. From
Superiors
Example.

And Examples, before our Eyes, have the same operation that *Jacob's pil'd Rods* had upon the Sheep, to produce a likeness in disposition and deportments. *Regis ad Exemplum*.— If *Jeroboam* Sin, he makes *Israel* to Sin. If the Father say *Sibboleth*, the Son will never frame to say *Schibboleth*: If the Mother be an *Ashdodite*, the Child will never learn to speak the Language of *Canaan*. And challenge them for it, Their answer is, Thus did their Fathers before them.

2. And much more if besides Example, there be encouragement given by Counsel and Advice. The simple Vulgar made no scruple to cry out, *Crucifie, Crucifie*, when set on by the Priests and Rulers upon whose Sleeves they had implicitly pinned their Faith, and to whose Vote they had captivated their assent.

3. And much more still, if the Superior add a peremptory Command: Then will the Inferior run and go, and do any thing commanded, and thinks that is his warrant. Then when *Absalom* said, *Mark Amnon* when his heart is merry Then set upon him, slay him, fear not, I Command you so: It is all done accordingly. The Canonists have said, If the Pope should command Evil, and forbid Good, and draw thousands of

Souls with him to Hell; yet all are to rest in his Determinations and Decrees, not once saying, *Domine Papa quid ita facis?* Sir, why do you so?

4. And more again yet if those Commands be backt either, 1. With *Promises* of Favour and Reward: When *Saul* spake of Vineyards and Olive-yards, places of Command, as Captains and Colonels, and high Offices at his dispose; the perfidious *Ziphites* to curry favour with an enraged Prince, proffer their Service, to deliver in- to his hand the best Subject the King had, and the best Patriot the Kingdom had: *Is not David hid among us? Let but the King come down, and we are ready for our parts to deliver him into the King's hand.* And bloody *Doeg* is ready at the very Instant, up- on Command given (when no other would execute it) to fall upon the innocent Priests (whom himself had first informed against) and to sacrifice a whole City and Tribe of them to the fury and lust of the enraged King, in hope of a Reward.

4. *Promi-
ses.*

1 Sam.
22. 7.

1 Sam.
23. 20.

1 Sam. 22.
18.

2. Or
threats
pecuniary.

2. Or *threats* of Punishment; Whether *Pecuniary*, and in their Estates. As when that Antichristian Beast did thunder out his Interdicts, That none should *buy or sell*, hold Office in Church or State, but he that did receive the Name, or Mark, of the Beast:

Beast: Then did all the Inhabitants of the Earth worship the Beast, save only the Lambs marked Ones, whose Names were written in the Book of Life. Rev. 13-7, 8. & 17.

2. Or *Corporal* and Capital Punishment, at which men do most tremble: Then if a *Nebuchadnezzar* make it present death not to worship his gods, and bow to his Image, All People, Nations and Tongues fall down presently. Dan 3-7. And in all these cases, the Inferior is apt to flatter himself with this, *Caveant Principes, Viderint Prelati*; Let the Prince, the Prelate and Churchmen look to it, they shall answer for me. It is their sin, if they command or lead amiss, not mine to obey: But remember what is said 1 Kings 14-16. so oft of *Jeroboam*, He sinned, and made *Israel* to sin: There was his sin, and their sin too; both sinned. He first in enjoining, they in obeying; yet were there some holy Priests, Levites and People, who understood better what was Sin, what Duty, what Obedience was due to Men, and what to God; that left their Places in the Ministry, Livings, Benefices, Cities, Suburbs; and others after them that left their Habitations and States, rather than they would turn aside to *Jeroboam's* self-devised new Worship and Idolatry. 2 Chron. 11-13, 14, 15, 16.

2. *Equals,*

2. *Equals.* 2. *Equals.* Towards whom some who know how to behave themselves with respect enough to their Superiors, are often to blame in their carriage: And are ready to excuse it with this, I knew with whom I had to do, *I am as good a man as he, &c.* Thus both Job and his Friends seem to be blame-worthy, for some unhandsome Clashes and Reflections: They begin with him, Chap. 8. 2. and one word brought on another; He tells them He was not inferior to them, and knew as much as they, Job 12. 2. 3. & 13. 2. And they again to be even with him, Tell him they are his betters, Job 15. 9 10. *What knowest thou that we know not, — with us are the gray beaded, and very aged men, much elder then thy Father:* So that ere they parted, they were not so good Friends as when they met. How much better were it to remember those good Directions, *Be kindly affectionated one to another, In honour preferring one another: Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, provoking one another; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better then themselves.* This would preserve Love.
3. *Inferi-* 3. Towards *Inferiors*, commonly men are most to blame: A tyrannical Lamech Gen 4. 23. will insult over his poor Wife, and use her like a Slave, not sparing to threaten her into

into awe and dread. And a wicked *Nabal* 1 Sam. 25.
 so rugged to a Servant, and to every man 17.
 (pust up with his wicked Pelf) that he
 knows not how to give any man a good
 word; nor could any *man tell how speak to*
him. And how often do the Rich ill intreat
 the Poor, who stands Cap-in-hand, and
useth Intreaties, when the Rich *answereth*
him roughly. And excuse themselves with
 saying, I knew with whom I had to do:
 Should I stoop to a Thistle! Thus did
Abishai's blood rise at *Shimei*, and calls
 him *Dog* (*dead Dog*) when *David* said, *Let* 1 Sam. 16.
him alone, I will leave him to God; It 10.
 may be he will requite me good for his
 cursing: I will not foul my hands with
 him, nor let choler rise against choler.
 There could not well be a worse Creature
 then *Shimei*, nor a greater or better Person
 then *David*, nor a worse affront offered;
 yet he lets all fall: That is the best flesh,
 that heals of it self. Yet we have a greater
 example then *David*, having to do with a
 worse then *Shimei*, even *Michael the Arch-*
Angel, when disputing with the Devil, *durst*
not bring in railing Accusation, only said, *The*
Lord rebuke thee. If an Angel did not give
 an unbecoming word; if an Arch-Angel
 (the highest of that Order) *durst not*, to
 Satan the vilest, and most cursed Creature,
durst

durst not : How durst thou give any reviling or opprobrious Language to thy Fellow-Servant, who bears the same Image of God with thy self?

2. From
good men.

1. Seem-
ing good.

2. Again, men may be considered as good or bad. And good, are either so *Seemingly*. Or, 2. *Really*. 3. *Eminently*.

1. Some are only *seemingly* so : And as we are apt oftentimes to have mens Persons in admiration, so what we see them do, who are esteemed wise, holy, learned, we think we may safely do the same. But we may remember our Saviour's *Item* given of the Scribes and Pharisees, who late in *Moses* Seat, and took upon them to be the Authentick Expositors of the Law, and were in that Repute for their seeming Sanctity, That it was a common belief among the Vulgar, that if only two were to be saved in all the World, the one must be a Scribe, the other a Pharisee ; yet our Saviour bids,

Mat. 23. 3. Do not after their Works.

2. *Really*
good.

1 *Cor. 8.*
10.

2. We may be as much out in following those that are really good, if we have no better warrant then their bare Example. Thus *St. Paul* shews, That if the weak Christian see him that is stronger sitting in an Idols Temple, and eating what was sacrificed to the Idol, he might be imboldened, without further enquiry to do the like.

There-

Therefore neither should the strong lay a stumbling-block before the weak; nor should the weak think we are to live by Example, but by Precepts.

3. Some are eminently and undoubtedly Saints, recorded in Scripture, and their practice, we think, may warrant us. But we must distinguish of their actions, that we may safely imitate them. 1. Some of their Acts were *High, Heroick*, and extraordinary above the common Rule, as *Ehud*, *Jael*, *Phineas*, *Elias* calling for Fire from Heaven upon the two Captains that came to take him. 2. Some were as much below, or besides the Rule, as *David's* in the matter of *Uriah*, *Peter's* behavior in the High Priests Palace. 3. Some were exactly conformable to the Rule, as *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless. In these alone, not in the other two, are we to imitate the best Saints.

For the first, They might have some particular warrant, as *Abraham* had to Sacrifice his Son; the *Israelites* to borrow of the *Egyptians*, and the like. Therefore when the Disciples alledged the example of *Elias* calling for Fire from Heaven, Our Saviour checked them, saying, *Ye know not* of what spirit ye are, nor by what spirit he

3: *Emi-
nently
good, as
the Saints
in Scrip-
ture.*

Luke 1: 6;

Exod. 3;

22:

Luke 9.

55.

was

durst not: How durst thou give any reviling or opprobrious Language to thy Fellow-Servant, who bears the same Image of God with thy self?

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There-

Therefore neither should the strong lay a stumbling-block before the weak; nor should the weak think we are to live by Example, but by Precepts.

3. Some are eminently and undoubtedly ^{3. Emi-} Saints, recorded in Scripture, and their ^{nently} practice, we think, may warrant us. But ^{good, as} we must distinguish of their actions, that ^{the Saints} we may safely imitate them. ^{in Scrip-} 1. Some of their Acts were *Highb, Heroick*, and extraordinary *above* the common Rule, as *Ebuds, Jaels, Phinehas, Elias* calling for Fire from Heaven upon the two Captains that came to take him. 2. Some were as much *below*, or besides the Rule, as *David's* in the matter of *Uriah*, *Peter's* behavior in the High Priests Palace. 3. Some were exactly conformable to the Rule, as *Zachary* ^{Luke 1. 6.} and *Elizabeth*, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless. In these alone, not in the other two, are we to imitate the best Saints.

For the first, They might have some particular warrant, as *Abraham* had to Sacrifice his Son; the *Israelites* to borrow of *Exod. 3.* the *Egyptians*, and the like. Therefore ^{22.} when the Disciples alledged the example of *Elias* calling for Fire from Heaven, Our Saviour checked them, laying, *Ye know not* ^{Luke 9.} *of what spirit ye are*, nor by what spirit he ^{35.} was

was in that act guided : Such extraordinary acts are not of *private interpretation*, nor common imitation. For the *second*, Those acts of *David* and *Peter* were fearful Violations of God's Law ; The blacks and blemishes in their stories, sad scandals to Religion ; bewailed by themselves, and not till after manifest Repentance pardoned : And with what face canst thou excuse thy self, by that for which they did both accuse and condemn themselves ? and look they should patronize and allow thee in that, which they did disallow in themselves ? The *third*, Are only for our imitation : Therefore when the Saints in Scripture say to us, as *Gideon* to his Followers, *What you see me do, do ye the same : Walk, as ye have us for Examples*, Phil. 3. 17. We are to follow them, observing these three Rules or Cautions : 1. Of *Election*, Not to do whatsoever they did, without discrimination : But as *Jehosaphat*, who walked in the *first wayes* of *David* his Father ; those were his best wayes, and fittest to be drawn into imitation. 2. Of *Restriction*, *Eatenus*, so far as they follow Christ, no farther ; where they leave Christ, we must leave them. 3. Of *Addition* or *Conjunction*, where you see them and the Lord going together, 1 *Thess.* 1. 6. Thus the *Thessalonians* are commended

Judg. 7.
17, 18.

2 Chron.
17. 3.

1 Cor. 11.
1.

commended, *You became Followers of us and the Lord*, which had been no such great matter, if they had followed the Apostles, without or against the Lord's Example.

2. Another case there is, wherein men are apt to plead excuse from the godly, viz. *Least they should offend them.* Now true it is, we should do any thing, rather than give offence to any godly person (one of these little ones) but a great difference there is between *Scandalum datum & acceptum*, an offence justly given, and an offence unjustly taken: The one is ever a sin, the other not. But this sometimes occasioneth a snare, as it fell out to Peter and Barnabas, as Paul relates at large, *Gal. 2.* and occasioned a sharp Reproof from Paul, to bring all to rights. And this it was: At Antioch Peter had conversed familiarly with the believing Gentiles, till certain came from James at Jerusalem, then did he withdraw Communion from the Gentiles, fearing belike the Jews would take offence; the like did Barnabas: They were both to blame. Paul comes thither, and foresees whither this halting and dissimulation might tend, viz. to endanger and undermine the simplicity of the Gospel, and to confirm the Jews in a pernicious sticking

to their old Ceremonies, now antiquated and abolished : He therefore stands up to vindicate the Truth, not caring who is offended, so truth may be maintained, *Amicus Cephas*, *Amicus Barnabas* ; *Cephas* is a Friend, and *Barnabas* a Friend ; but Truth is more then all Friends. Peter upon the debate was convinced, and no hurt came of this Diffension, but much good : And they parted Friends. It were to be wisht all will say, That there were no differences among Christians, no discrepancies among Preachers ; *but that all did think and speak the same things, being perfectly joynd together of the same mind, and of the same Judgment.* And that in matters of less moment we could comply one with another, as he who was made *made all things to all men* in such cases. But in some cases we must not think it strange, again if the same *Paul* dissent from *Peter*, and dislike his temporizing. The ceremonial, dark and typical Worship of the *Jews* ; and the Evangelical is not the same : I give but a hint, more instances might be given. All compliance with the godly, is not alwayes godly compliance ; unless Saints were either infallible at all times, or at that time have truth on their side ; otherwise they are sure as like to miscarry, as a *Peter* or a *Barnabas*. There is

1 Cor. 1.
10.

1 Cor. 9.
22.

is therefore a necessary asserting of Truth sometimes, though, in so doing, we have to do with great and worthy Persons of a different Opinion or Practice. Learned *Parvus* doth at large discuss the case, and saith, Though *Peter* may seem excusable in seeking to avoid offence giving to the Weak, which is a duty, he saith: But seeking to shun a less, he gave a greater; yea, a double, one to the Jewish Believers at *Antioch*, whom this act of his might confirm in their Judaism, the other to the believing *Gentiles* there, whom he thereby compelled to Judaize, refusing Church-fellowship with them. So that, saith he, *Peter's* offence was none of the least, but was seven ways sinful, 1. Against the weak *Jews*, whom he confirmed in their Error. 2. To *Barnabas* and the rest, whom he drew into an Error. 3. Against the *Gentiles*, whom he compelled to Judaize. 4. Against *Paul* preaching Liberty, whose preaching this practice did cross. 5. Against the truth of the Gospel, from which he scandalously swerved. 6. Against himself, whom he dishonoured by this unseemly dissimulation. 7. Against God, whom he greatly offended, by his scandal given to the Brethren. Thus far of Excuses taken from good men.

2. From *the bad*, we are apt to take excuse

1. From
bad men.

excuse sometimes: But if from the good no good excuse is to be taken; much less from the bad is any but bad to be expected. But we think (according to the *Proverb*) a bad excuse is better then none at all: And what is that? why, when men have shewed much passion, and let fall much ill Language, Railing, Reviling, Reproaches, &c. They think to excuse all by saying, I know to whom I did it, a Dog, one whom I could not call bad enough, one without the Church, &c. I had not done it else. But what is become of those Gospel-Rules? *Give no offence to the Jew, nor to the Gentile, nor to the Church of God*, 1 Cor. 10. 33. *Walk wisely towards them that are without*, Col. 4. 5. *Shew all meekness to all men*, Tit. 3. 2.

3. Men may be considered, 1. As Friends. 2. As Foes. 3. Strangers. First, Many excuses are taken from our Friends; as that we did so or so, but it was upon the solicitation and importunity of a Friend, and such a Friend as was to me what *Jonathan's* Armor-Bearer said to him, *Behold, I am with thee, according to thy own heart*, and how could I deny him? But we should remember those excellent sayings of old. We must accommodate ourselves to our Friends, *usque ad aras*, so far as may consist with honesty and good conscience.

1. From Friends.

1. Importunity.

1 Sam. 14.
7.

science. *Amicus Plato, &c.* Such an one is my Friend, and such another my Friend, but Piety and Conscience much nearer Friends. *Oh nimis inimica amicitia!* St. *Austin* crys out; Oh the bane of ill Friendship! Oh pestilent, pernicious Friendship! *saith he, Solus non facerem*, I had never done so or so, had I been my self alone: But when they said, *Eamus, faciamus, &c.* Come, let us go together; I had not the power to resist, saith he. Remember how dear *Jehosaphat* paid for his familiarity, and associating with *Abab*, and had this sharp Reproof, and sad Message sent to him; ^{2 Chroni} *Shouldest thou help the Ungodly, and love them* 19. 2. *that hate the Lord; therefore is wrath upon thee from the Lord.* This unhappy friendship, or good-fellowship, as commonly called, is the great *Apollyon* and *Abaddon*, the Destroyer of thousands and millions, and hath laid heaps upon heaps. Many have, when too late, cryed out and accursed such Friends and friendship, and many more will at the last day. Then *Abab* will have no better Language for his *Jezabel*, by whom he was so bewitched, then *Jehu* had, when he trod her under foot, *Ton cursed woman.* ^{2 Kings} Oh cursed *Jezabel*, it was long of thee I 9. 34. *sold my self to work wickedness! Unhappy I that I ever saw thy Face: Accursed*

am I that I ever hearkned to thy counsel, and more accursed thou that gavest it. So *Amnon* to *Jonadab*, I woe the day that I ever knew thee, and took thee for my Friend. *Judas* to the Priests, I rue the day that I ever was acquainted with you. The courtesie and love of such Friends is like *Joab's* kifs to *Amasa*, Kifs and Stab; or like *Judas* to Christ, Kifs and Betray. So that all such may complain with *David* of *Ahitophel*, his old friend, *It was not mine Enemy, — But it was thou my Friend, my Guide, my Acquaintance, &c.* that hast undone me.

2. To preserve a Friend.

2. Others will excuse themselves from a Friend, *My Friend was in danger*, it was to do him good, save his Life, Estate, &c. Thus might *Lot*, the *Levites* Host, *Rabab*, and the *Egyptian* Midwives plead, all sought to preserve the lives of those who were under their hand. But *St. Austin* resolves it as an unquestioned Maxim, No Sin is to be committed, be it to save our own or others Lives. He highly commends *Firmus* a Bishop, who had hid a Christian that was sought for, and being examined whether he had sheltred him, or what was become of him, He did not answer (as many would not scruple to do) I know not where he is, &c. *Equivocation* was not then known in the Church. He was *Firmus* by name, and

*De menda,
ad consent,
c. 13.*

Firmior

Firmior in the Faith, said the Father: His answer was, *Mentiri nolo, prodere nolo*; I may not lye, nor will I betray. Many Torments he endured; at length the Emperour moved with his constancy, set them both at liberty: And if any untruth, any excusatory, or officious lye might in any case be lawful, you would allow it here. But that holy Fathers determination is, To ask whether any lye be lawful (saith he) is to ask whether any Sin be lawful; or to ask whether that which is unjust and unlawful, be just and lawful.

2. There are Excuses taken from our *Foes*: And these we think are to be admitted; It was to my Adversary, he had provoked, had affronted me: Flesh and Blood could not bear it. Thus pleaded those Sons of *Jacob*, when they dealt so cruelly and perfidiously with the men of *Shechem*, after the deflouring of *Dinab*, *Gen. 34.* Should he deal with our Sister as with an Harlot? But the old Patriarch was none of their Council, nor could he do less then execrate the Fact. We are most of us of the Pharisees belief, I must love my Friend, and may hate an Enemy: But our Saviour's Doctrine is to love our Enemies; *Amicos diligere omnium, Inimicos Christianorum.* *Matt. 5. 44.* To love our Friends, saith *Tertullian*, is the

common practice of all ; of the Publican : But to love an Enemy, is the proper Character of a Christian. Holy *David* would not consent to have him touched, that sought his life. And *Job* took comfort in this, That he never rejoiced in the destruction of him that hated him, nor did he so much as suffer his mouth to sin, to speak or wish him ill : And this is the note of a generous and high Spirit, whereas Revenge is an argument of a low and feeble Spirit.

Job 31.

29, 30.

*Inferni est
animi exi-
guis, Vo-
luptas, ul-
tis. Juv.*

*a. We do so
them as
they to us.*

2. But some will plead, *I do but to him as he did to me* ; and is not this warrantable ? *Solomon* shall answer thee, No, saith he, *Say not thou, I will recompence evil ; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee*, Prov. 20. 22. And more plainly, Prov. 25. 29. *Say not I will do to him as he hath done to me, I will render to the man according to his work*,

Rom. 12.
19.

Mat. 5. 39.

1 Pet. 3. 9.

We are often warned, not to avenge our selves, or resist evil, or return railing for railing ; but to overcome evil with good. A divine Victory, and a double Victory this is ; the one over thy own passion, the other over thy Enemies fury : By this means thou mayst heap coals of fire on his head (to melt him either into repentance, or self-condemnation) as *Saul* seemed once to be, when malice was repayed with mercy, *He lift up his Voice, and wept*. This is the *τὸ περισσόν*, the

1 Sam. 24.

16, 17. &

26, 21,

the singular thing wherein our Saviour would his Followers should out-do all others. And is a great degree of *Perfection*, To be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. Mat. 5. 47, 48. To return good for good, is *Publicanish*; Evil for evil, is *Heathenish*; Evil for good, *Devilish*: But to return good for evil, is *Divine*; *Christ-like*, who forgave, and pray'd for his Enemies: *God-like*, who is kind to the unkind, and to make the nearest approach and proximity to the life of the blessed, yea to the Deity it self.

3. Some are *Strangers* to us; And we 1. Ex. after are apt to think we may do what we will from strangers. to them: we never saw them before, and shall never buy or sell with them more. But the Divine Precept strictly forbids all ill usage of Strangers in many places, and requires he should enjoy the same Privileges with themselves: *Ye shall not oppress* Exod. 22. *or vex the Stranger*, saith he, *for thou wast a* 11. and *Stranger in Egypt; and thou knowest the* 23. 9. *heart of a Stranger*: Therefore put thy self Lev. 19. in his case, and do as thou wouldst be 31. done unto. Exod 12. One Law was both for the 43. 49. Home-born and the Stranger, for the Forreigner and the Native: The same Ephah, Shekel, Weight, Measure, Price, Truth, Equity, Behaviour. How courteous were *Abraham* and *Lot* to the Strangers

that resorted to them. And *Philoxeny*, which properly signifies love of Strangers, is as much pressed in the *New-Testament* as a duty of Christians and Ministers, as most others. As therefore it were an unworthy thing to lay a stumbling-block before the Blind, though he can never see it; an unhumane thing to curse the Deaf, because he cannot hear it: So a most unchristian thing to deal injuriously with the Stranger, because he may never discern it. Thus have I done with Excuses taken from other men.

CHAP. IV.

Excuses taken from God, and from Satan.

*Excuses
taken from
God.*

Neither are Men content to fetch Excuses from themselves, or others, but they will open their mouths against Heaven: Some have been so bold as to *challenge God*, seeking any starting hole to creep out at; as we have too many instances, whereof some follow.

*1. From
his Providence.*

1. Such as go about to excuse themselves, and fault *Gods Providence*: The first Excuse that ever was made, seemed to glance this way: *The woman thou gavest me,*

me, gave it me, and so I did eat, q. d. Hadst thou not given me that woman, I had never offended: But God gave her to be a help, not a snare to the man. Thus the Drunkard faulteth the *Wine*, and therein God's Providence. Had not the Wine such fragraney, delicacy of taste, and that intoxicating quality, I had not been overcome. And the riotous Gallant, had I not had such an Estate fallen to me, I had never been so luxurious: Thus must all be cast upon God, and every man innocent. But God gave the Woman to be an inciter to Good, not an enticer to Evil: It was thy own fault, *Adam*, not thy Makers. Thy own intemperance, Drunkard, not the Vine, Grape, or Wine that is in fault. And thou riotous person, It is thy wicked abuse of thy State, not the State it self which is to be condemned; that was given for better Uses. But how ill is God dealt withall in the mean time, when his own favours are turned against him to his dishonour! Suppose now a Prince should advance a Servant, or a Son, to the highest degrees of Honour and Dignity; and should as some of the *Roman* Emperors have done, and once a King of *England* did, give him a Partnership in the Empire: If this Servant or Son should afterwards lift up the heel against

Henry II.

against his Sovereign, and break out into Rebellion, and then should say, You should never have raised me to this height of Honour, but have kept me lower; we would think he pleaded fair for his deprivation and destruction. How justly may the

Jer. 5. 7. 8.

Lord say, *Shall I not be avenged on such a Nation as this? When I fed them to the full, they assembled themselves by troops in Harlots houses.* And in another place, When I gave them Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, and multiplied their Silver and Gold, they bestowed it all on *Baal*; spent it all on their Lusts: Therefore he threatens to return and take all away again as fast as he gave it them, *Hosea 2. 8, 9.*

**2. From
Gods De-
crees.**

2. Some fly higher, and pick a quarrel at *Gods Decrees*, as if they would charge all their Sin and Condemnation upon God; themselves being either innocent, or inevitably destined thereunto. For thus are such black-mouthed persons represented cavilling, *Ezek. 33. 10. If our Sins and our Transgressions be upon us and we pine away in them, how can we then live?* q. d. It is no fault of ours if we perish, God Almighty might have helpt all this, & he had pleased. *But who art thou, O man, that thus disputest with God?* Yet let us reason the case together, and see where the fault is, in God or thy self.

**Rom. 9.
20.**

self. First, Thou wilt confess it was free
 for the Sovereign Creator to make his
 Creatures of what form, and for what use
 he pleased ; as some Rational, others Bruits,
 Plants, &c. Nor have any of them cause to
 say, why hast thou made me thus, not us
 Men, Angels ; us Bruits, Men and Women.
 2. That God creating Man, should endue
 him with such excellent faculties of under-
 standing to discern Good and Evil, of Li-
 berty of will to make Election of his own
 acts ; thou wilt not say this was evil yet.
 3. To prescribe to man thus formed holy
 Precepts, commanding Good, forbidding
 Evil ; nor can this be called Evil, but most
 just ; that God's Sovereignty might be
 owned in the World, and Man's Subjection
 exercised. 4. To hedge Man in by
 Promises and Threats of Rewards and Pu-
 nishments, to excite Hope and Fear, as, Do
 this, and live ; Transgress, and die, can't
 but be yielded just and reasonable. 5. As
 to reward Obedience, so to punish Disobe-
 dience, can't be accounted other then most
 just. Otherwise, as in our lower States,
 when Kings and States have made Laws
 against such and such Crimes, under such
 Penalties, the Offender might say, Had
 not such a Law been made, I had not been
 an Offender or Sufferer ; whereas it is not
 the

Ezek. 33.
11.

the King, or the Law, but thy Delinquency only that makes thee a Sufferer. But hear what the Lord answers to that Cavil himself, *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil wayes; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* In which Answer, Observe these four particulars: 1. Here is a strong *Asseveration*, by way of Negation, attested with an Oath, *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the Wicked*, q. d. I call Heaven and Earth to witness, I do not make any to damn them; It is far from me to use my absolute Sovereignty, in an *arbitrary* sentencing them to damnation. 2. Here is a plain and positive *Affirmation*, under the same attestation (to both, *as I live.*) It is a pleasure to me, that the Wicked turn from his way and live, to which I am ready to give my assistance, if he sincerely desire it. 3. Both those are backed with an earnest and redoubled invitation, [*Turn ye, Turn ye,*] He exhorts, invites, excites, directs, knocks, calls, waits again and again, *Turn ye, Turn ye.* 4. A patherical Expostulation, *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Herein assigning the proper and immediate cause of Ruine and Perdition; q. d. It is your
own

own default, and that only; not my will, but yours is in fault: Not my *will not*, but your *will not* is the bar. *You will not come unto me, that you may have life*; I have called, and ye refused; not I have refused you, but ye me: I would have gathered you, as the Hen gathereth her Chickens, to cherish Mt. 23; and preserve them, but ye would not. It 37. is not God's *shall not*, but thy *will not*; nor thy *cannot*, but thy *care not*, thou hast most cause to fear. What wilt thou have then to plead, O Sinner, in the day of Visitation, when thou wilt be forced to acknowledge not God's *Decrees*, but thy sins have found thee out, and undone thee; nor art thou bound with the Chains of God's Decrees, but with the Cords of thy own Sins, *Prov. 5. 22.* Therefore let none say my case is desperate, as they cryed out, *Numb. 17. 13, 14. Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish, we shall be consumed with dying:* There is no necessity of thine, or any mans destruction, how great a Sinner soever, while God saith, *Why will ye die?* No impossibility of any mans Salvation, while God saith, *Turn and live.* Therefore Sinner leave making Objections, and fall to some course, whereby thou mayst secure thy Soul. Thy case, at least, is as fate as the *Gibeonites* or *Ninevites*: The *Gibeonites* did

did not say, there is a Decree gone out against us *Canaanites* to destroy Root and Branch ; therefore are we dead men, it is in vain to strive against Decrees and Divine Threats, or to sue for our Lives, or use any endeavours : But they set their wits awork to save themselves, and sped. *Rahab* did not say, *Jericho* is devoted. *Nineveh* did not say, The word is gone out of God's mouth, & can't be reversed: But who knoweth if God may not be intreated? *Acts* 27. 20. When *all hope* of safety was gone, they wrought still, and came all safe to Land : while there is life, there is hope ; while endeavors, hope, while mercy in God, reconciliation by Christ, and space of Repentance, there is yet hope. Therefore do not thou cast away thy self through carelessness, but set thy self to the use of the means prescribed, and say, *If I perish, I'll perish* crying, praying, repenting, reforming, believing, flying to Christ ; I will die in the way to the Refuge City, I will adventure over the deepest waters to go to Christ, as *Peter* did ; and if I sink in my way towards him, I'll cry, *Lord save me, or I perish.*

Mat. 14.
30.

3. From
God's per-
mission.

1. As to
Grace.

3. A third excuseth himself from God's permission ; 1. As to Grace. 2. As to his outward Estate. As to *Grace*, when some have been blamed for their Ignorance, or wicked

wicked course of life: This Answer hath been returned, I do as well, and serve God as well, as *he will give me leave*: And no man is to be blamed that he is no wiser or holier then God hath made him; But this is with the Sluggard, to keep his hand in his Bosome, and himself in his warm Bed, till God send warmer Weather, and to say, I'll not feed my self, but expect Ravens should feed me, or Angels bring me meat: But what saith the wise man, *Awake Sluggard, open thine Eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with Bread.* Prov. 10, 13. Consider man, God hath made thee neither Stock nor Bruit, given thee another Spirit, endued it with Reason; given thee divers helps besides, as Exhortations, Reproofs, Promises, Threats, better Examples; besides the checks of Conscience, and motions of his holy Spirit. Use thou thy endeavour, and see if God will not give thee leave to be better. In other cases we use not to argue thus, I am as rich as God hath made me, and I must be content, and no fault of mine if I have no more: Here the diligent man findeth Hands, Legs, Endeavours, Head, Brains, and what ever he can. But here is the misery of it, when every thing else suffereth Violence, the Kingdom of God must suffer none for us, but expect rather
it

it should offer Violence to us. No Prayers, Study, Endeavours for more Grace; but expect, as *Naaman*, the Sore should be stroked, and we cured without our washing. The Wind should come rushing upon us; and we be filled with the Holy Ghost, as the Apostles were once, and we not praying. Or that a fiery Chariot should coast us to Heaven, as *Elias* once, though we have none of his fiery zeal, activity and holiness in our Lives. But consider again of this Answer, Who art thou that sayest? Thou dost as well as God will give thee leave? Will he not give thee leave to be better? who commands, exhorts, threatens, promiseth, affordeth such means; the Ministry of his Word, motions of his Spirit, time, space, opportunity: forbear therefore to charge God so foolishly. 2. Others there be, who excuse themselves, by God's permission, as to their outward State, ascribing that to his Providence, which he will never own. But with this difference from the former; They impute their ill estate to God, which he never made so bad, and these their good outward state, which he never made so good. Thus those wicked one *Zachary*, who had enriched themselves by oppressing the Poor, would intitle God to their wickedness: They cry out,

2 Kings 5.
11.

Act. 1. 2, 4.

2 Kings
2. 11.

2. As to
their out-
ward
state.

Zach. 11.
5.

out, applauding themselves, *Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich.* Thus *Ephraim* plays the cunning Merchant, gets an Estate by wicked means, Balances of deceit; yet crys out, *I am become Rich, I have found Substance; there is no Iniquity or Sin in all this.* Thus the insatiable *Chaldean*, when by Rapine and Spoil he had possessed himself of all the Kingdoms and Treasures of the Earth, *he imputeth all to his god*, (as we have known some have done in our dayes, crying out, Providence, Providence,) yet might he be better excused for entitling his ill-gotten power and wealth to his god (a cursed Idol) then we Christians any ill acquired state to the true God, who loveth Righteousnesse, and hateth Iniquity, and is an Avenger of all acts of injustice.

A fourth excuseth himself, with a soul reflection upon God for his *Austerity*, as he will pretend. Thus the evil and slothful Servant pleads, when he had done nothing at all in discharge of his duty; *I knew thee to be an austere man, reaping where thou dost not sow, &c.* therefore I hid thy Talent, &c. I had been a better Servant, if I had had a better Master; I thought all was a case: I had as good sit still for nothing, as work for nothing, for it would have come for nothing. But I pray consider whose

arguing this was : The two endeavouring Servants said not thus, found not God such a hard Master ; But received an *Engle* of praise, and for a small measure of faithfulness and diligence, had full measure, heaped, pressed down, and running over, of Reward : Thou shouldst have found the like, if thou hadst shewed like diligence. But observe what shifts men will use to spare their pains, *There is a Lyon in the way*, saith the Sluggard : There is difficulty, impossibility in the way. When the Devil can once get thee to entertain an hard thought of God, he first drives thee from thy duty, and at last drives thee into despair. *Cain's*, *Judas's* and *Spira's* despair, sprang first from such a horrid thought. But it is the whole design of Scripture, as *Luther* well observed, to set out God as gracious, and merciful, and abundant in goodness, as *Exod. 34. 6, 7. Psal. 145. 9. Heb. 11. 6. 1 Cor. 15. ult.* But men will not do thus in other cases ; If a gangrened Leg or Arm (*Cuncta prius tentanda*) they will not presently cut it off ; but try all means first, and if no remedy, cut it off, to preserve the whole at last. But here, as if men had made an Agreement with Death, and Covenant with Hell, they throw off all endeavours, and think to charge their Condemnation

demnation upon God's inflexible severity.

5. Another again destroys himself, and excuseth it when he hath done, by a clean contrary pretence of *God's mercy*, Deut. 29.

19. *I shall have peace*, saith he, *though I walk after the imagination of my heart, and add drunkenness to thirst*, q. d. though I add sin to sin, God is so merciful, I shall do well enough; though I neither fear, nor repent.

Thus *Justice* abused sends some to Hell, and *Mercy* others; and all must be laid upon God. When he pipes, they will not dance; when mourns, not lament: If he command, warn, threaten; *Behold severity*

enough to drive men to despair. Again, if he exhort, intreat, beseech men to be reconciled, wait to be gracious, swear he delighteth not in the death of the wicked;

Behold mercy enough to make us secure and lazy. The Lord may justly complain, *I am*

pressed under you, as a Cart full of Sheaves. Amos 2. 13.

One man saith, I have only tears; had I any hope, or the least assurance, I should have some heart to pray and reform, but now what joy to sit or endeavour?

And another saith, because I have such hopes, and so full assurance (a lying presumptuous assurance) I will cast off all fears; sure I am, I cannot out-sin the grace and mercy

of

of God. But *Tertullian* answereth such well, They who can *Salvo metu & fide peccare, salva venia in Gehennam detrudentur*; They who can live in sin, and yet say, they have never the less of Faith, and fear of God, shall be cast into Hell, and yet God have never the less of mercy.

6. For not
giving
Grace.

Jer. 10.

Joh. 3. 27.

Jam. 4. 2.

6. There be that would be excused, by casting an imputation upon God, for his *denegation* and with-holding his *Grace*; for thus they plead, *It is not in the power of man to direct his own way*, to convert himself: The Scripture saith, *No man can receive any thing, except it be given him from Heaven*. And if God give not his *Grace* and *Spirit*, how should I have it? or how should I be better? But give me leave to ask, Didst thou ever go and ask these, and desire them? *I have not*, saith *St. James*, *because you ask not*. And if *Grace* and the *Spirit* are not worth asking, thou art worthy to go without them. Shall the Sun be faulted for not giving light, when thou shuttest thy Windows, and drawest the Curtains? Or the Springs of niggardliness, because they spout not their waters into thy mouth? Or the Earth be charged with illiberalness and unkindness, because it putteth not its Corn into our Sacks, or its Treasure into our Laps, without ploughing for the one, searching

searching and digging for the other? And if thou *searchest for Grace as for Silver, and* Prov. 2. *seekest for it as for hid Treasure,* there is a 4th 5. promise thou shalt have it; *Thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.* We expect, as I said before, every thing else should ask pains, but Grace none at all: But that it should drop into our mouths, as the Rain from Heaven; or be brought to us, and set at our Bed-head when we are asleep, or sick, as *Eli* 1 Kings 19. 5. 7. had his meat brought to him by an Angel. We must have a short and easie way to Heaven, or we will have none.

7. The last Excuse we shall mention in relation to God, is of such, who when they, or theirs, have fallen into some foul sin, as Theft, Whoredom, &c. are ready to excuse themselves, and say, It could not be helped; *God ought them a shame, and hath now paid it them*; and they now hope God hath done with them: (Some again are so ignorant, as to say, The Devil ought them this shame.) But know, O vain man, God owes thee no such shame, till thou hast shamefully cast him off; *Non deserit nisi deferentes,* The shame sprang from thy self. Aug. Prov. 22. 14. *The mouth of the strange woman, saith Solomon, is a deep Pit,* (but mark what follows) *be that is abhorred*

of the Lord shall fall therein. There not Satan, but God owes and pays the shame : But more plainly, *Eccles. 7. 26.* where you see the cause, and what went before ; *Whoso pleaseth God, shall escape from her, (God will preserve his Josephs) but the Sinner (the old prophane irreligious Sinner) shall be taken by her.* So likewise ye may read, *Rom. 1. 26.* That the Gentiles who smothered the natural light of their own Reason, and sinned against Conscience, not liking to retain God in their knowledge, but became vain in their imaginations ; how God left them, and as they went on farther and farther in a way of sin, God went on in punishing. First, *verse 24. God gave them up to uncleanness, &c.* *verse 26. God gave them up to vile affections,* and then they fell into unnatural and prodigious lusts. And last, *verse 28. God gave them quite and clean over to a Reprobate mind,* and then he paid them home their shame with a witness ; for then were they filled with all and all manner of unrighteousness, *verse 29, 30, &c.*

*Excuses
taken from
Satan.*

2. *Excuses taken from Satan :* Some again are apt to take Excuses from Satan, calling their sin upon him ; and because he is so bad, think they may lay all their dirt at his Door : Thus was the first sin parted between

between God and Satan. The woman that thou gavest me, said the man; There's for God. The Serpent beguiled me, said the woman; There's for Satan: There's nothing but excuse upon excuse, and sin upon sin; Yet did not this avoid the just Sentence against both, for it was their own voluntary act; Satan might perswade, did not compel. One saith, the Devil as a sly Serpent deceived me; another, as a roaring Lion affrighted me; a third, as a fell Dragon, cast a flood of temptations out of his mouth, and over-whelmed me; a fourth, as a restless Friend, he dogged and haunted me, I could never be quiet for him. All this excuseth not, the sin is thy own; sollicite and enrice he may, compel he cannot: Thy will he hath no power over, but by thy own consent. The faithful Commander, betruſted by his Prince with keeping a Fort, thinks it not enough to hold no Correspondence with the Enemy; but when he assaults him with his Batteries, he manfully repels him, makes up his Breaches, prevents his Underminings, seeks to Countermine him; prevents his nearer Approaches, Sallies out against him, spends all his Darts and Ammunition against him, endures all Extremities; and when he fears, and wants Supplies, sends to his

Prince and is reliev'd. So it is with us, not enough to say, I was tempted, enticed, assaulted, winnowed, buffeted, dogged; but we should take the whole armor of God, make resistance, watch, pray, take the shield of Faith, cry out, and send to Heaven for assistance, as *Hezekiah*, with him is an Arm of Flesh, but with us is the Lord of Hosts to fight our Battels; and with him it is all one to save with strength, or with them that have no might, as *Asa* said, Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on thee. Help us against this Enemy: And in thy Name we go out against him. Resist the Devil, saith St. James and St. Peter, and he will fly from you: Resist him manfully, stedfast in the Faith, and all his fiery Darts are blunted: The Devil craves thy own help to destroy thee. Those (for the most part simple and sorry Creatures) Witches and Sorcerers, the Devil never leaves them till he gains their consent, and a compact signed and sealed (as their own act and deed) then, and not till then (though they have been ignorant and lewd before) doth he reckon himself sure of them. And as these Witches have confessed, they could have no power over some, till they had gotten something of theirs: So it is with their Master. The Devil

2 Chron.
14. 11.

Jam: 4. 7.
1 Pet 5. 9.
Eph. 6.

Devil is call'd by many names in Scripture, a Tempter, Deceiver, Accuser, an Enemy, Lye, Murderer, &c. no where a Compeller: Preserve thy Will free and pure, and he sinks. It is not in his power to work in thee *to will and to do what he will* at his pleasure, that is God's peculiar Prerogative, *Phil.* 2. 13. As learned Zanchy speaking of the power of the Devil upon mens Souls, saith, The Devil hath great power, may have power over the Air, Water, over mens Bodies, Goods, Cattle, States, (as in *Jobs* case) may abuse our Senses, Phancy, work upon our Affections, solicit and assault the Will: But this can he neither bend nor bow, without our consent; That is only in the power of God to do.

De potentia demonum in animas.

CHAP. V.

Excuses taken from other things.

3. *Excuses
taken from
other
things.*

1. *Ignorance.*

1 Sam. 12.
15.

Prov. 24.
11, 12.

WE have done with Excuses (as to sin) taken from *our selves* and *other persons*: We come now to speak of such as are taken from *other things*, of which there are so many (Reader) that I do not promise thee to enumerate all, but such as are most common and obvious. And first, *Ignorance* is a great and common pretence; and were it really so, it might pass for a just defence: As when *Abimelech* was charged to be in a Confederacy with *David* against *Saul*, he avowed he was altogether ignorant of any such thing, it was, or should have been accepted as a clear purgation. But ignorance is oft made a Cloak to *carelessness*, and wretched neglect of duty belonging to our places. Thus *Solomon* takes it for granted some do; *If thou forbearst* (saith he) *to deliver them that are drawn to death, and sayst, Behold we knew it not: Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider, and shall not he render to every man according to his works?* q. d. This is a poor shift, a meer put-

put-off; Conscience is not so acquitted; Thou mayst pretend thou wast not there, hadst other business, or some indisposition of Body, but thou shouldst have been there. If *Nicodemus* had not opened his mouth on Christ's behalf, when he was traduced, *John* 7. 51. And *Joseph of Arimathea* had not entered his Dissent at the Council-Table, when he was condemned: The one had never been worthy of the name of a Disciple, nor the other of an *honourable Counsellour*, *Mark* 15. 43. Thy duty is, if thou art betruſted with an Office, to wait on thy Office, *Rom.* 12. 7.

Luke 23.
51.

2. And now we have ſpoken of an Office; there are ſome ready to plead their Place and Office for excuse, that muſt bear them out. Thus did *Naaman* plead, *When the King goeth into the houſe of Rimmon, and leaneſh on my band,* (for that is my place at Court) *and I bow in the houſe of Rimmon as doth the King, the Lord be merciful to me,* and hold me excuſed herein. The like alſo might *Pilate* have pleaded, if that would excuſe him: My Place is to releaſe one at the Feaſt, though a Murderer, and to condemn the moſt Innocent, if the people ſhall importune it. Thus alſo no queſtion did thoſe perſecuting Biſhops in *Queen Mary's* dayes flatter themſelves, when they burnt thoſe

2. Their
Place and
Office.

2. Kings
5. 18.

those Innocents: We have taken an Oath to the Pope, and our Place tyes us to condemn them to the Flames, whom the Pope declareth Hæreticks. And when they gave Sentence, they said, They did it *ex Officio*; that is, by vertue of their Office. How much better had it been for them to have refused those Preferments with a *Nolo* *Episcopari* in good earnest, as *Naxianzen* sometimes did: And *Jovinian* the Em-pire, crying out, *Ego sum Christianus*; or to have resigned thole places, as *Celestine* the Fifth is said to have the Papacy, returning to his solitariness and privacy again? Or they might all of them have inscribed that on their Monuments, which Bishop *Hall* reporteth that *Haderian* the Sixth Ordered to be engraven on his, viz. That nothing in all his life befel him so unhappy, as his Preferment.

3. Exam-
ple of their
Predecess-
sors.

3. Others alledge the example of their Predecessors: They who have gone before them have done so and so, made so much of their Places; but *quo jure, qua injuria* would be enquired. Godly *Nebemias* came after such, and might have fleeced and exhausted the people, and enricht himself, if he could have satisfied himself with this Plea: But thus did he not do, because of the fear of the Lord: Yea, the very Servants of

of the former Rulers bare Rule, and got Estates. But he considered the people over whom he was set, were now poor, and had groaned under many Pressures and Taxes: Therefore he received not the Perquisites of his place, nor did he *eat the Bread of the Governor*; but spent his own Estate among them, and fed many at his own Charge; chusing rather to be a poor Prince over a rich People, then Rich over a Poor. *Non sibi, sed Patriæ*, is a good Motto for a Prince or Patriot: *Prosit ut Prodest*, a good Motto for a Prelate, as Bernard counselled *Eugenius*. It is a memorable story that *Luther* relates of a *German Lub. coll.* Prince, at a time when many of the Princes were together, and discoursed of their several States, Territories and Revenues; This Prince said, Though his Territory and Revenue was not equal to theirs, yet in one thing he counted himself as happy as any of them; that was, the Love of his Subjects: For he said, He could venture himself to take a Nights lodging in the house of any of his Subjects, and sleep securely without a Guard. A rare example of clemency and confidence in a Prince, and of Love and Loyalty in a People.

4. I am not
the first,
nor shall be
the last.

Job 21.
33.

4. A fourth saith, *I am not the first, nor shall be the last*; like enough: But what a piti-ful Excuse is this, to excuse thy Sin by the Sin of others! As Job said of the Grave, *Many are gone before, and innumerable shall follow after*; it may be said of Sin and Hell. *Lamech* could speak of a Murderer before him. *Jeroboam* was not the first that made a golden Calf to be worshipt, *Aaron* had done so before him; nor was he the last, for all, or most, of the Kings of *Israel* that followed, continued in the same Idolatry: It is not safe sinning by Example. Many Fashions are new, *few new Sins*; nothing new under the Sun. This Sin that all our Discourse is about, viz. Excuse-making, had both our first Parents deeply in it: Thus did *Adam*, thus did *Eve*; from the beginning it hath been thus, and bears the oldest date of any other Act, viz. *Anno primo Creationis, mense primo*; if not *Die primo* too, as some conceive. Polygamy had a

Gen. 4. 19.

Gen. 6. 11.

Nam. 25.

8.

Nam. 16.

3.

President in the old World, in *Lamech*; Oppression was before the Flood: Fornicators had *Zimri* and *Cozbi* put to death for this Sin long before they were born: Seditious Opposers of Magistracy and Ministry had a *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram* Predecessors. The Sabbath-Breaker reads of one stoned to death for that Sin long

ago, *Numb.* 15. 36. And the Blasphemer of another, *Levit.* 24. 23. The wicked Witch and painted Strumpet had a *Jezabel* their foundress. Now these are our Examples, and recorded not to Excuse, but admonish us.

5. And he that saith, *The rest and great-est in the place* do so, and why may not I; thinks if he have not a great deal of reason on his side, yet he hath good Company to back him: But the greatest man in the Parish is not alwayes the best. He who is highest in the King's Books for matter of *Subsidy*, may be lowest in God's Book for matter of *Piety*. The best Living and the best Liver dwell sometimes a great way asunder. In our Saviour's time, the Poor were they who received the Gospel. *Mar.* 11. 9. And in the Apostles dayes, *not many Wise, or Mighty, or Noble* owned it, but the Poor and Simple. *1 Cor.* 1. 26, 27. In after-times of Apostacy, the purity of Religion was preserved among the *Waldenses*, and the *Poor men of Lyons*, as they were commonly called. And long before them, the great *Worthies* of the World (*of whom the World was not worthy*) were clad in Sheep-skins and Goats-skins, and dwelt in Caves and Cottages, out of the Worlds notice, unless to be persecuted, afflicted, tormented.

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6. *A good intention.*

6. *A good intention* is a great Plea, and we think nothing excuseth more: But though an ill intention is enough alone to mar a good action, yet is not a good intention enough to render an ill action good; *Bonum ex integris malum ex quolibet defectu*; There must be a concurrence of all due circumstances to make an action good.

2 Sam. 6. 7.

1 Sam. 15.
23.

Jer. 7. 31.
& 19. 5.

7. *Antiquity.*

Uzzah doubtless had no ill intention, when he put forth his hand to hold the Ark, yet perisht for his *Error*. *Saul* paid dear, notwithstanding his good meaning, for sparing the best of the Cattel for Sacrifice. What could they have other then a good meaning, who sacrificed their own Children to *Moloch*, in imitation (it is likely) of *Abraham's* forwardness to Sacrifice his Son? yet never did the Sun see a greater abomination. This Weed hath pestered the Church from time to time, and hath turned *S Sharon* into a Forest, *Bethel* into *Bethaven*: This brought in at first adoration of Images, Crosses, Reliques; Invocation of Saints, Prayer for the Dead. Blind Zeal the Father and good Intention the Mother, have hatched most of the Brats of Popish Superstition.

7. Next comes *Antiquity*, and looks to be heard with some Reverence and respect. Thus

Thus it hath been time out of mind; that which hath been good, is good still; our Fathers did thus before us. *Answer:* Then let us to *Mass* again, from thence to *Judaism*, & thence to *Paganism*, (for that is the elder Religion of the three.) Let us to our Mast and Acorns again, for that is the elder Diet. *Paganism* was the Mother or Nurse of many Popish Rites and Customs, borrowed from the *Heathens*, as their holy Water, Lustrations, Lights, Images, tutelar and local Saints, &c. True it is, Popery is ancient, so is Error, so is Sin. The fall is more ancient then the Gospel, which was brought in upon it. *Mahumetism* is ancient too, can plead a thousand years standing, breaking out much about the same time with Popery, Six hundred years after the Incarnation. But *Judaism* is before both, and *Paganism* elder then them all, if ancientry must carry it. But there is an Antiquity senior to them all, *Id verum Tertull.* *quod primum*: That which was from the beginning, saith the Apostle, 1 *John* 1. 1. Thither we appeal, thither we provoke; To the Law, and to the Testimony; To Christ, *Esay 8. 20.* and to his Apostles we will refer our selves, to decide all the Points in Controversie between us and Rome. And I think it is as equal a motion, that which Christ and the

1 Kings
18. 14.

Apostles taught shall go for the best Religion, (be it Popish or Protestant) as that once, *The God that answereth by fire shall be acknowledged the true God*, (whether *Jehovah* or *Baal*) when there was such halting between two Opinions, as there is now adays by too many. If therefore the Papists can shew us out of the Old or New Testament, their Pope's Supremacy, Purgatory, plurality of Mediators, Pardons, Invocation of Saints, Image-worship, praying for the Departed, their *Opus operatum*, Transubstantiation, Elevation, Adoration, Circumgestation of the Host, forbidding Marriage to Priests or Ministers, &c. We shall promise to subscribe the Tridentine Creed, and confess our Error, and return into the lap of Rome. But if they be not to be found there, let them cease to accuse us of *Novelty*, *Lutheranism* or *Calvinism*, and accuse us of *Petrinism*, *Paulism*, *Scripturism* or *Christianism*, if they please. So that in fine, all the great flourish that Papists boast of Antiquity, is but like that of the *Jews* to *Jeremy*. We will be of our Fathers Religion. Thus did our Kings, Princes, and our Fathers, offering Incense to the Queen of Heaven. It was not their *ancient Fathers*, in *Moses's*, *Joshua's*, *Samuel's* dayes; or in the best Kings, *David's*, *Solomon's*; but
after

Jer. 44. 16.

after the Defection, in *Jeroboam's* dayes, and under the degenerating Kings, *Ahaz, Manasseh, Ammon, Zedekiah, &c.*

8. *Tradition* succeeds *Antiquity*, and 8. Tradition. pleads for its continuance, and the observing such things as have been handed to them by their Guides and Elders. Therefore did the *Pharisees* quarrel with Christ and his Disciples, charging them with too little respect to the Tradition of the Elders. And our Saviour chargeth them again with too little (or no) respect to the Commandments of God. Their traditional *Corban* Mat. 7. 9. had expunged the fifth Commandment. As the *Papists* Image-worship, after the II. *Nicene* Council hath justled out the Second Commandment, and made but an *&cetera* of it. The *Samaritan* woman Joh. 4. 19. pleaded hard with our Saviour for their old Worship, *Our Fathers*, said she, *worshipped in this Mountain*: But you *Jews* anathematize us, and tell us, *Jerusalem is the only place of Worship*. Our Saviour tells her, *Ie know not what ye worship*. But we do, *For salvation is of the Jews*; you have Tradition, we Scripture. We may say the like to the *Papists*; you have Tradition, but give us Scripture, or we can't expect Salvation in your Church; you have Tradition for auricular Confession, Purga-

tory, extreme Unction, Invocation of the Saints, the blessed Virgin especially, &c. But where is the Scripture all this while? *Quod non scribitur, non creditur.*

9 *universality.*

9. But *universality* makes a great noise, and pleadeth next, Why should not we do as do the most? what our Fore-Fathers, Kings, Priests, People, all do, is safe for us to follow. Just as good Divinity, as his was *Loyalty*, who said, Whom God (by his permissive providence) and all the people choose for King, him will I follow, though they had a rightful *David* for their Sovereign, and the other a rebellious Miscreant. The *Jews* might have disputed Christ out

2 Sam. 16.
18.

Joh. 7. 48.

of the World by this argument, *Do any of the Rulers or Pharisees believe in him? but this people that know not the Law are accursed.*

The greater part is most an end the worst: Where was *universality* in *Noah's*, *Lot's*, *Elias's* dayes, when each of them were left alone? The godly have been ever almost

Acts 19.

over-born with numbers. The *Ephefians* talked of no less then *all Asia and the World* besides for their *Diana*. *Elias* was opposed by four hundred Prophets of *Baal*: One *Athanasius* against the whole World. So *Luther* had Pope, Emperour, Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, all against him: Christ's is still a little *Fleck*, *Luke* 12. 32. The loose

Pro-

Protestant would bear down the serious by this account ; the Papist the whole Society of Protestants ; the *Mahometan* the *Christian* ; the *Pagan* all. Learned *Brerewood* divides the World into *thirty parts*, and finds Christianity to have but *five*, *Mahometism* *six* , and *Paganism* hath the other nineteen parts. The whole World was once all *Pagan*, another while *Arrian*, since *Antichristian* (when all that dwelt on the Earth worshipped the Beast) but a small Remnant whose Names were written in the Lambs Book of Life in *Red Letters*, but in the Popes Registry in *Black*. The World was never so happy as to be all *Christian* : What it may be in those last dayes prophesied of *Esay* 2. 1, 2. I know not, *When the Mountain of the House of the Lord shall be exalted on the top of the Mountains, and all Nations shall flow to it.*

10. To this of universality, I may sub-joyn his opposite *singularity*, and the excuse made thereupon ; would you have me *singular* ? like no body ? stand alone ? Shall I presume that I have more wisdom, piety, conscience then all the World. This *Luther* confesseth was a great stumbling-block to him, when he discovered first the gross Errors of Popery ; what shall I be wiser then all the World ? what is become of our

10. Singularity.

Fathers? Had I not better *Cum Platone errare quam cum aliis recte sentire?* Had I not better subscribe to the received Doctrines and Opinions of School-men, Universities, Councils, then hold a private belief of my own? But *Noah* was content to be singular, & though, it is likely, the World condemned him sufficiently in their Censures, He is said to *condemn the World* upon a true account, *Heb. 11. 7.* *Lot, Elias, Micaiah, Jeremy,* and our Saviour, were all singular in their times. But is it not better to be saved alone, or with a few, as *Noah, Lot* and *Rahab*? then to perish with a multitude. Was not *Joash* more happy that he was preserved, when the whole Family was cut off, and rescued by a strange providence, and reserved for a Kingdom, then if he had undergone the same lot with the whole Royal Race?

2 Kings
11. 2, 3.

11. The
Law of
the Land.
1 Tim. 1. 8.

11. There are in the next that think to shelter themselves under the protection of *the Law of the Land.* And the Law is good, as the Apostle saith, *if a man use it lawfully.* And for our Laws we have cause to bless God that we have so many good and wholesome Laws, and to bless the King that we enjoy the benefit of them: But yet the legal Christian is not the right Christian. Now there are two sorts of men that shrowd themselves under the wing of the Law;

Law: First, One saith, I do what the Law
 of the Land requireth, living peaceably
 and conformably thereunto; then what
 hath any man to say to me? I answer,
 Though Man hath not, God may. It is
 impossible, said that learned *Casnist*, that
 the Laws of Men should command what-
 soever is to be done, and forbid whatsoe-
 ver is to be avoided: That is the peculiar
 Prerogative and Perfection of the Divine
 Law. Besides, the Laws of men, saith he,
 never pretend to the government of the
 Thoughts, Heart, Spirit, and inside of the
 man; in which lies the chief, both of
 Grace and Sin, Vertue and Vice, which
 the Law of God doth principally take no-
 tice of. The *Adequate* object of the good
 Subjects Obedience is the Law of the
 Land, but the *Adequate* object and mea-
 sure of the good Christians Obedience is
 the Law of God. And therefore though
 the Subjects conformity to the Laws of
 men absolve him in humane Courts, and
 procure him the common benefit of the
 King's Peace; yet it is conformity to the
 Law of God, which procures spiritual
 peace of Conscience before God. So that
 if you enquire in a civil and political sense,
Vir bonis est quis? Who is the good man?
 The answer is, *Qui consulta patrum, qui*
Bishop
Sanderson
de Leg.
Hum. Pra-
lect. 6.

Leges, juraq; servat; He that observes the Laws and Edicts of the King and State where he lives; but if in a religious sense, *Qui consulta Dei*; He that, as *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, walketh in all the Ordinances and Righteousness of the Law of God without rebuke.

Luke 1. 6.

2. There is another sort of men, when charged with rigor, and hard dealing with their Neighbours, (men of a perverse and contentious spirit) are ready to make their defence; I do but *what the Law will bear me out in*: who can blame me for following the Law, and taking what advantage the Law will give me? my Neighbour shall have Law and Justice at my hands, and what he can recover by Law. But we have a common saying, *Summum jus summa injuria*, Extremity is extreme hard; Extreme right, is extreme unrighteousness. We Christians have a Command, That our moderation should be made known to all men: We are to be a Law to our selves, above the Laws of Men, under the Law of God. Consider Christian, if the Lord should say to thee and me, you shall have Law and Justice, what you can claim by the Law, and no more: Both you and I were eternally undone. Remember, with what measure thou metest, it shall be measured

Phil. 4. 7.

Mat. 7. 2.

to thee again. And he shall have Judgment *Jam. 1. 13;*
without Mercy, who hath shewed no Mercy:
 And mercy both in God and all good men
 should triumph over Judgment. Do not
 thou therefore take thy Fellow-Servant by
 the Throat for the *hundred pence*, when
 thou lye'st obnoxious to the Justice of God
 for *ten thousand Talents* (as it is in the Pa-
 rable) least he, for thy extremity, deal in
 just extremity with thee, and cast thee in-
 to Prison, till thou shalt satisfie for the
 whole Debt. *Mat. 18;*
34.

12. Another sort of men make this ex- *It is my*
 cuse, *It is my own, and may I not do with my own, and*
own what I will? what hath any man to do *I may do*
 with me in such case? This is the ex- *what I*
 cufative plea of two contrary kinds of *please with*
 men. *that.*

1. The *Prodigal* saith, If I spend high,
 and make all away, what is that to any
 man? I may do with my own as I think
 good. So saith the Miser, If I keep all in
 my Chest, and live below my state, what is
 that to any man? *All is Ours*, say both;
 I say neither; Nothing is ours: Nor are
 we our selves our own, saith the Apostle; *1 Cor. 6. 19;*
b. e. at our own arbitrary dispose, no nor
 yet our States: we are Stewards and Fidu-
 ciaries. *The Silver and Gold is mine*, saith *Hag. 1. 9;*
 the Lord: Thy Wooll, Flax, Wine, Oyl, *Hol. 1. 2;*
 mine.

mine. *Nabal* was as much Fool as Churl, when he talked so much of *his* Bread, *his* Cheese, *his* Victuals; none must taste of his Cheer but himself and his own Domesticks. The Law of Men will question neither the Prodigal or Miser, God will: The Lord will enquire what good thou hast done with thy State. There are two Questions that all whom God hath given Estates to, should study to make a good Answer to: 1. *The one is*, How earnest thou by it? was it by honest labour, and conscientious diligence in thy Calling, and God's blessing therewith: Then much good may thy State do thee, and much good mayst thou do with it. But if by sycophantizing, as *Zachew* call'd it, by bribery, extortion, grinding the face of the Poor, false Weights and Measures, detaining the Labourers Hire, or Servants Wages, racking Tenants, &c. Thy State is not thy own, nor did God give it thee. Thou hast *Achan's* accursed wedge in thy Tent: This is *as Alienation*. Thou must restore with *Zachew*, if thou wouldst have Salvation come to thy house. The next question is, How thou hast kept or employed thy Talent: The Miser thinks he is safe enough, he got it hardly, and keeps it charily; makes no idle expences, nothing spent in Taverns,

Cards

Cards or Dice, or costly Entertainments : But he keeps what he hath got, and increaseth it daily, as if this was the only Talent that God would call him to an account of. Thy State is not yet thine, till thou hast as well the Use as the Possession of it. The rich Miser is not so properly said to have his Estate, as his State possesseth and enslaveth him; *Habet nummos, non habet ipsum* : We say, Fire and Water are bad Masters; Gold and Silver are worse, they sink the Soul in destruction and perdition. The Miser is the greatest monster in the World; no Creature in the Universe that only lives to it self. The Sun communicates his light, the Springs are free of their waters to every thirsty Passenger: God's direction is to *thee to drink the waters of thy own Cistern* (to take part of what he hath given thee thy self) and that *thy Fountain should be dispersed abroad*, to the relief and benefit of others. God, the Church, State, the Poor, thy Family and Friends challenge a share in thy State. The Prodigal thinks he can answer it as well, or better, I have not been base or fordid, keeping and hoarding up; I have lived on what I had, and like a man: I count him next door to a mad-man, that is too saving for his next heir, — *Parcus*

*Quo mihi
fortunat,
si non con-
seditur
uti. Hor.*

Prov. 5²
15, 16.

Herat. ob heredis curam, nimiumq; severus, *Affides*
insano.— And him to be stark mad that
 spares all his life, to die rich.

Juvenal. Est furor band dubius, est & manifesta Pbre-
 nefis,
Ut locuples moriaris egenti vivere fato.

But how hast thou spent ? upon thy Lusts ?
 what is the account thou wilt make to
 God, to thy Ancestors, or Posterity ? I
 had some thousands left me, some may say ;
 One part spent on my Back and Belly, ano-
 ther in Gaming, a third on Pleasures,
 Hawks, Hounds, Harlots ; a fourth in Ta-
 verns, Plays, Entertainments : Thus what
 the Palmer-worm hath left, the Locust
Joel 1. 4. hath eaten ; what the Locust, the Cater-
 pillar ; what the Caterpillar, the Canker-
 worm hath eaten. Thus, at last, all is gone ;
 where is Christ's part all the while ? what
 hath been laid out on pious and charitable
 Uses ? Here is a sad account, a State ruined,
 and a Soul ruined. This man is as sad a
 monster as the other, and as to his
 House and Posterity worse : Thou shou'dst
 have followed the same direction of the
Prov. 5. wise man, *Drink water out of thy own Ci-*
25. *stern, and let streams run to others, yet let*
them be only thy own, saith he, that is, retain
 the

the principal still. The Sun indeed gives light to others, but withall preserves the principal, and waists not his stock: It were prodigious, if in a prodigal Vain it threw it self out of its Orb: The Springs water the Earth, yet so, as to keep a stock still going. If Naboth said, *God forbid I should sell the Inheritance of my Fathers*: Let sober men say, *God forbid I should make away the Inheritance of my Fathers* by Riot and Luxury: We are but Stewards, remember that. And all good men know it is their duty to honour God with their Purse, as well as with their Persons. A David would say, What shall I do for the Name, and House, and Service of God? A Nebemiah, What shall I do for the Publick, and my Country? A Zachaeus, What shall I do for the Poor? All good men. How shall I give account of my Talent with joy, and not with grief?

13. Others think they make a lawful excuse, when they say, *What I do is in it self lawful*: But *Licetis perimus omnes*, There may be danger in the use (abuse rather) of lawful things. Poyson is often given in a golden Cup, or wholesome Dish; sometimes in a Nofegay. Be not too bold with things lawful: there may be a snare in Company, Employments, Mirth, Recreations,

Luke 17.
26, 27.

Luke 21.
34.

1 Cor. 6.
11. & 10.
23.

tions, Pastimes; yea, in thy very Calling. To swear in it self is lawful, but unnecessarily and frequently, sinful. The old World and *Sodom* perisht in these *Licitis*, (these lawfulls) *They eat, they drank, bought, sold, built, planted*: But minded nothing else. Lawful and sinful, are near Neighbours. If we go to the utmost of lawfulls ground, we tread ere aware on sinfulls. Our Saviour gives an *Item* against worldly cares, which are sometimes commanded, sometimes commended; yet a surfeit, and over-plus of them, is as dangerous as of eating and drinking when immoderate; though all lawful in their measure, though few consider it. There is somewhat more necessary, which must be observed above lawful; e. g. To rest on the Lord's day, and forbear work, lawful; but the sanctifying the day is the necessary. To read a good Book, very lawful and commendable that day; but, if nothing hinder, to forbear coming to the Publick Worship, is sinful and scandalous. So in many other cases, Sacrifice sometimes best, sometimes Mercy better: In the use of things lawful therefore the Apostle gives three good Cautions; 1. All things are lawful (that is, things indifferent, and not sinful in their nature,) but all things are not expedient, profitable, con-

convenient. Here I must have regard to
my self, saith learned *Paræus*, how much,
 how far, how long expedient. 2. *All*
things are lawful, but all things edifie not;
 though lawful to me, here I must have re-
 gard to my Neighbour. The third is, All
 things are lawful to me, but I will not be
 brought under the power of any: I must see
 I be not enslaved to my Belly, Pleasure, Re-
 creation, &c. but that I can as well forbear
 as use them; As St. *Austin* said of *Alipius*,
 he having been once at the Play, grew mad
 of them, *Abstulit secum insaniam, quasi sti-*
mularetur redire, &c. That he could not
 for his life keep from them, till he was af-
 terwards changed.

*Turpe est
 esse serous
 gula, aut
 ventri.
 Par in lo-
 cum,*

14. There be many that will plead *Christian*
Christian liberty, and think that may ex-
 cuse many things, which savour rankly of
 unchristian Libertinism, rather then of *Christian*
Liberty. They can travell or work
 on the Lord's day, sit up Night by Night
 at Cards and Dice, frequent Taverns and
 Plays day by day, drink Health after
 Health, go to Mals, be present at Idol-
 worship, and cover all with the Veil of
Christian liberty, while they understand
 not well what *Christian liberty* meaneth.
 It is a pretious and costly Jewel, purchased
 with the blood of Christ: And as all pre-
 tious

ious Jewels are to be charily looked to, so this as much as any. I shall therefore,

1. Briefly tell you wherein *it stands not*.

2. Wherein *it stands*. 1. It frees us not from the observation of the holy Laws of God. 2. Nor from Civil subjection to the just Laws of Authority over us; or Servants to the command of their Masters, &c.

1 Pet. 2.

13, 14, &c.

as St. Peter at large declares. 3. Nor doth

it set us free from the Bonds and Rules of Sobriety, Temperance, Modesty, Chastity, &c. to give scope to Riot, Excess, Luxury, or any Misdemeanour. 1. *But it stands* in

freeing us from the Bondage of the old Ceremonial Law, Gal. 5. 1. 2. Frees Be-

lievers from the Curse of the Moral Law, Gal. 3. 13. 3. From our Sins. 1. As to

the Guilt, 1 John 1. 7. 2. As to the Dominion and Power, Rom. 6. 14. & 8. 2.

3. As to the Condemnation of Sin, Rom. 8. 1. 4. Believers are freed from the

Wrath of God, 1 Thess. 1. 10. 5. From Hell, 1 Cor. 15, 55, 57. 6. From a Spirit

of slavish Fear, and servile Bondage, 2 Tim. 1. 7. But Christ hath not at all set us free

from the duties and pursuance of Holiness and Righteousness, as you may see, 1 Pet.

2. 16. As free, *but not using your Liberty* for

xxix.

a Cloak of Maliciousness (or Naughtiness, so the word signifies) *but as the Servants*

of

of God. Where you have the Sum and Epitome of Christian Liberty in its two parts: 1. Negative, not using it as a Cloak of any Naughtiness or Evil. 2. Positive, but as the Servants of God, *q. d.* notwithstanding your Liberty, you must carry yourselves as such who are not your own, but have a Master, a God to please, whom you must eye in all your actions, especially in the use of your Liberty. That as another Apostle saith in another place, 1 Cor. 7. He that is called, being man's Servant, need not care for that, he is God's Free-man: So he that is called to be God's Free-man, needs to have a care, for he is still God's Servant. Surely Christ had died to little purpose, if he had come to set us free, so that we might do what we please: But he sets us free from all Iniquity, to *purifie to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* And that we being delivered from our Enemies, might serve him (without fear) in holiness and righteousness all the dayes of our Lives. Tit. 2. 14.
Luke 1.
74. 75.

15. But the *grand* Excuse of all is, *the our cal. Calling.* This the most plausible, and under it all those in the Parable take Sanctua- *grand Ex-*
ry, Luke 14. 18, 19, 20. I have my Land *case.*
to take possession of, and look after; and I
my Oxen to go try, saith, another, and I
I have

have married a Wife, saith the third ; and there are certain cares attending that condition, especially till I am settled. Plausible and fair Excuses all, but such as they fairly excused themselves out of Heaven by. Know, O Christian, thou hast *two Callings* to follow. Both must be looked after, or all is not well : Thou hast two Hands, and God gives thee, as he did *Moses*, two Tables to hold : Thou must as well look to the first, as to the second. Thy outward Calling is given to thee, as *Eve* to *Adam*, to be an help to thy Spiritual Calling, and not as *Michal* to *David*, to be a snare. The outward Calling is to be subordinate to thy Spiritual, and so *subordinata non pugnant*, as we say ; they will not clash. But as *David* and *Jonathan*, each strengthen one anothers hands in the Lord. *Let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God* : That is either an ill calling wherein thou canst not abide with God, and God with thee, or ill managed. Take heed the lean Kine devour not the fat, and that the great Husband do not devour the good Christian : There are store of great Husband and Huswives in Hell ; but such as served Mammon more then God ; slight in God's Service, serious in the Worlds : *Shimei* looking after his Servants, lost his life ;

Deut. 9.

15.

1 Sam. 18.

24. !

1 Sam. 13.

16.

life; take heed in looking after thy Servant the World, thou loose not thy Soul. The good Servant knows how to *take his Work, and leave it*, (as we say) that is, so to time and place every thing, that nothing be lost by negligence and carelessness; but every thing in the fittest time and place. And he is the good Christian that knows how to take the *work of his calling and leave it*, that all things may be so contrived and fore-cast, that one business do not enterfere with another, to the prejudice of either. Now tell me, thou that hast a great Trade, & art full of business; thou canst contrive it so as to have a Dining-time, and canst thou not find a praying-time? Thou wilt spare time to speak with a Customer, and hast thou no time to speak with thy God? Thou wilt be sure to take time by day or night to over-look thy Shop-Book, and hast thou no time to look into thy Soul-Book, thy Bible, or thy Book of Conscience? It is alwayes ominous when *Lot* and *Abraham* part; when a great Trade or Stock draws thee from God, and the society of his People: He never did thrive after. And remember, that all these Self-Excusers in the Text are rejected, the Lord saying, *None of these shall taste of my Sup-* Luke 14.
per. 24.

The man-
ner of the
Country,
Trade, &c.

Gen. 29.
26.

Gen. 30.
33.

The odious
Names put
upon Vir-
tue.

16. There be that will excuse themselves and some things not otherwayes to be justified, with this; *It is the manner of the Country*, or the way of their Trade, and the like. Thus did that subtle and faithles *Laban*, when he had wronged *Jacob* in his Nuptial Contract, giving him *Leab* instead of *Rachel*, colour over his Cheat; *It is not the manner of our Country to give the Younger before the Elder*, saith he. But remember what a man this was that made this evasion, a man of no Conscience, that would say and unsay, do and undo; a man full of his shifts, that had changed *Jacob's* wages ten times over. There is a mystery in all Trades we say, and if there be not a mystery of Iniquity in some of them, it is well. Howsoever, *Mos Patriæ*, the custom of the place, or way, is put a poor shift, *Trita frequensq; licet sit via, crimen habet*; And be it never so ordinary, it is very bad. How much better would *Jacob's* resolution become us, *My Righteousness shall answer*, and speak for me in time to come. Or *Abraham's*, *Not so much as a Thread or Shoe-latchet*; least it should be said, That fraud and dishonest dealing had made me rich.

17. Some again are confirmed and hardened in their wayes, by the odious and reproachful Names put upon Religion, and the

the honourable Titles wherewith Vice is adorned : 1. The *odious Names* wherewith Piety is branded, an old practice to smut Religion with disgrace. Thus the very Name of Christian was once a term of disgrace : *Extriabilis superstitio*, Tacitus call'd Christian Religion. And they were wont to say in the Primitive persecution-times, Such a man was a *good man, but a Christian*. Thus the Name of Protestant is odious in *Spain* : In *Italy*, Piety is Lutheranism : In *France*, Hugonotism. Civility is stiled Dulness, Sobriety Unsociableness, Seriousness Sullenness, Profession Hypocrisie. Such is the envy of Nature (said our fluent Bishop Hall) That where she sees a better Face then her own, she is ready to scratch it, or cast dirt on it, knowing that all Vertue hath a native beauty in it; she labours to deform it with the foulest Imputations.

Tert. Apolog.
Secus vir bonus, sed Christianus.

2. By the *honourable Titles* put upon Vice. Thus is Pride termed Neatness, Dissembling Courtship, Swaggering Gallantry, Quarrelling Manhood, Ribaldry Urbanity, Drunkenness Good-fellowship, &c. That as Physicians gild over their Pills, to cover the bitterness of the Ingredients; so do these gild over their Sins, and so they

2. The fair Titles put upon Vice.
Fallit enim vitium specie virtutis & umbra.
Juven.

Dr. Spurr
shows his
Medita-
tions.

Elsay 5.20.

are more easily swallowed down. But though the Physician hath put upon many Diseases specious Names, and calls a Plague-Sore a Carbuncle, and the white filme, which taketh away the sight of the Eye, a Pearle: Yet who can be brought (saith a late learned Doctor) by such slender Artifices into Opinion, That a Carbuncle is less loathsome, or mortal, then another swelling, which hath not so gay a name? or that that blindness which is caused by the Pearle in the Eye is more comfortable, then the loss of sight by any other accident. There is a sad Woe pronounced to both of these, *Woe to them that call Evil Good, and Good Evil, that put Darknes for Light, and Light for Darknes, Sweet for Bitter, and Bitter for Sweet.*

CHAP. VI.

*Excuses taken from certain Doctrines
and Scriptures misunderstood, and
Observations ill applied.*

THere are others yet behind, and too *Doctrines*
many that think themselves safe and *misapply-*
excusable, by many Doctrines and Scrip-
tures misunderstood, and misapplying
fundry Observations they have made.

As first, That great and mysterious *1. That of*
Doctrine of Election and Reprobation, *Election.*
which is indeed of that altitude and depth,
that, as those waters in the Sanctuary, there
is no wading through, or passing over
them, without that Reason-silencing, and
abrupt admiration of the Apostles, *ὦ βάθος*.
Oh the amazing Depth, and riches of the *Rom. 11.*
Wisdom and Knowledge of God ! how un-
searchable are his Judgments, and his ways
past finding out ! yet how do many argue
from this Doctrine : If I am elected, I am
safe, though I do nothing ; Election will
take his effect, and I shall obtain. On the
other side, if reprobated, all endeavours are
of no effect ; for God's Decrees cannot be
frustrated, I shall unavoidably perish. But

I Answer, Who taught thus to reason? Thy business is not to pry into God's secret will, but attend his revealed, and thy own duty: *Secret things belong to God, things revealed to us*, Deut. 29. 29. And

first, For Election, know, there is no such absolute Election, as to be exclusive of the means, but doth include and imply all the wayes and means preparing for glory, as effectual Calling, Faith, Repentance, holy Obedience. See *Ephes. 1. 4. God hath elected us before the Foundation of the World, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in Love.* So 2 Theff. 2. 13. *God hath chosen you to Salvation, through Sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the Truth.*

As there is no such absolute Promise of Harvest and Fruitfulness, exclusive of man's industry and endeavours in ploughing and sowing, but the means are included in subordination to the end.

2. And as for *Reprobation* (not to wade into the Controversie:) It will be acknowledged to be as just in God to decree to punish men for Sin, as to inflict the punishment, when the Sin is committed: As it is the same justice in the Magistrate to Enact such a Penalty for such an Offence, as to execute it after the Offence committed. God punisheth none but for Sin, nor doth decree

*Cum pre-
destinatio
ad finem
includit
media non
potest hunc
specare qui
negligit
ista. Pri-
deaux.*

*Deus ordi-
nans ad
penas
propter
peccata
non est
magis in-
justus
quam cum
penas in-
fligit pro-
pter peccata.
Parans.*

decree to punish any, but such, in whom he findeth Sin unrepented of. 2. As for thy

Reprobation, look not into this Abyſs, neither caſt thy ſelf from this Pinacle: But ſtudy thy duty, which is to work out thy Salvation with fear and trembling.

3. Be aſſured, no man can know himſelf, or any other, to be a Reprobate, (though ſome may have aſſurance of their Election;) Becauſe, 1. God can call and change the heart of the moſt wicked man at the laſt hour. 2. All God's Elect were ſometimes Children of wrath as well as others, *Ephes.* 2. 3. 3. And ſome of God's own Children have fallen ſometimes into moſt foul ſins, and ſometimes layen long in ſin, *1 Cor.* 6. 10, 11. *Tir.* 3. 3.

4. Therefore it is not God's ſecret Decree thou ſhouldeſt ſo much fear and ſtartle at, as thy own Sin and Diſobedience, which is that which prepares the Veſſels of wrath to their deſtruction. As *Reboboam* had no rea-

ſon to ſay, There is a ſatall Decree, that my Kingdom ſhall be rent from me, therefore all is one what courſe I take, or whoſe counſel I follow; but he ſhould have hearkened to the Counſel of thoſe ancient men, and truſted God with his Crown. Nor could *Zedekiah* ſay, There is a ſatall Doom on *Jeruſalem*, that it ſhall be ſacked,

and

Jer. 38.
20, 23.

and burnt to ashes : But he should have hearkened to *Jeremy*, who besought him to yield to the *Caldean*, assuring him, then all should be safe : Otherwise, saith he, (not God's Decree, or Sentence, denounced, but) thou wilt set *Jerusalem* on fire.

Doct. 2.
That all
are Sin-
ners.

A second Doctrine abused, is, That *all are Sinners*, and there is none Righteous, no not one. Both branches are true ; the first is affirmed 1 *John* 1. 8. The other *Rom.* 3. 10. But what then ? therefore sayst thou, I may do well enough, though a vile Sinner, and be saved, though not so righteous and religious as some seem to be. But mark, there is a great difference between *Sin and Sin* : All indeed are guilty of Original Sin, and all of years of Actual ; But all are not Sinners alike, some are obstinate, wilful, presumptuous, desperate Sinners, that make a mock of Sin, a trade of Sin ; It is their Meat and Drink. Others are humbled, trembling, penitent, mourning, reforming, believing, self-abhorring Sinners, who watch, pray, resist Sin, shun the occasions of it. What is this to thee, who goest on in sin ? Their's are Gnats, thine Camels : Their's Moats, thine Beams. There are certain Sins, one may call them, the spots of God's people, and have not excluded them Salvation. As first, 1. It

Prov. 14.
9.
Prov. 4.
37.

is not sin *remaining* in the Regenerate, but sin *reigning* in the Unregenerate that damns, else what had become of *Paul*? *Rom. 7. 18.*

2. Not sin *loathed*, but *loved*; what else had become of the *Publican*? *Luke 18.*

3. Not sin *bewailed*, but *cherished*; what had else become of *Peter*?

4. Not sin *fallen* into, but *continued* in; what had else become of *David*?

5. Not sin *resisted*, as *Joseph*; but pursued and persisted in, as *Ahab* and *Jeroboam*.

6. Not of *Ignorance*, but *Presumption*; else what had become of *Noah*?

7. Not against *Resolution*, as *Peters*; but resolved on, as *Judas's*.

8. Not out of infirmity and fear, as *Abrahams*, but of design and premeditated Malice, as *Ananias* his lye, *Acts 5.*

9. Not *repented* of, but sin *unrepented* of, as the *two Thieves* are Examples.

10. Not sin *confessed*, but *covered* and smothered, *Prov. 28. 13.*

Lastly, Sin forsaken, never damns; sin not forsaken, ever damns, *Prov. 28. 13. Ezek. 18. 21. Manasseh* an example of the one, *Pharaoh* of the other.

1. We must distinguish of Righteousness; 1. There is a Legal and Evangelical Righteousness. 2. A Righteousness before

1 Theff.
3. Po.

fore God and before men. Before God there is none Righteous, according to the strictness of the Law : But *Zachary, Elizabeth, Abel and Lot*, and all truly godly are called and counted *righteous* by an *Evangelical* righteousness, while they endeavour to fulfil all righteousness, though in many things fall short. But though they dare not plead their righteousness before God, (in whose Eyes the Heavens are not pure) yet can they before men say, *Ye are witnesses and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we have had our Conversation among you : Whose Oxe or Ass have I taken ? or whom have I defrauded ?* There are sins *Quotidianæ Incurfionis*, as *Tertullian* calls them, some over-sights, which the best are not free from, but bewail, and they consist with Grace. But there are other gross sins (*Vestantia Conscientiam*) which make foul work with Conscience, and denominate a man unrighteous in a high measure ; these shut out of Heaven, *1 Cor. 6. 9, 10.*

Doct. 3.
Christ died
for Sin-
ners.

A third Doctrine much abused to strengthen men in sin, is, *That Christ dyed to save Sinners*, which is the most comfortable Doctrine in all the Bible ; a saying worthy of all acceptance, and due consideration : But what use doth the presumptuous Sinner make of it ? Then, saith he, shall I do well

well enough, though I live in sin; for I can't out-sin the Merits of Christ's Blood, which is said to *cleanse from all sin*. And thus would he make Christ the *Minister* and *Maintainer* of sin, as if he came not to *destroy the Works of the Devil*, but to *Patronize* them. But if thou wilt understand, know, That Jesus Christ came not to save us in and with, but *from our sins*, Matth. 1. 21. that is, from the practice, love and dominion of sin: He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all Iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good Works. Tit. 2:14 Every word of which Text speaks life to the Sinner, but death to his sin: Christ came indeed to reconcile God and the Sinner, not the Sinner and Sin: He pulls down the partition-wall between God and the Believer, but sets up a partition-wall between the Believer and his Sin. But many deal with Christ, said a worthy Bishop, as some do with their *Prince*, or some great *noble man*, they care not how much they take up, and how far they run in debt; and when payment should be made, they get a *Protection* to elude the course of Justice: So do many fly to Christ for his Protection, saith he, and this is a common cheat.

1 John
3. 8.

Tit. 2:14

Dr. Hall

Doct. 4.
We are / a-
ved by
grace.

4. There is no Doctrine more abused then that of free grace: That we are saved by Grace, not Merit. The Scripture ascribeth all to Grace, we are justified by Grace, Rom. 3. 28. Saved by Grace, not Works, Ephes. 2. 8. Where Sin aboundeth, Grace superaboundeth, Rom. 4. 20. Hence the Libertine assumeth, I will rely on the Grace of God, and not doubt of Salvation, though I am such a Sinner. The Apostle easily foresaw that such an Antinomian and Anti-evangelical Inference would be made by some ungodly ones, as Jude calls them, who would turn grace into wantonness, therefore doth twice obviate and refute it in one Chapter, Rom. 6. 1. Shall we continue in Sin, that Grace may abound? And verse 15. Shall we sin, because we are not under the Law, but under Grace? And knocks down both with the same short answer of defiance, *μὴ γένοιτο*, God forbid. Shall Grace act against it self, and destroy Grace? shall *gratia gratis data* become *Ingratum faciens*? 1. These do quite and clean corrupt the Doctrine of Grace, which teacheth to deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World, Tit. 2. 11. 2. These do pervert the use of Grace set down Rom. 6. 14. Sin shall not have dominion

nion over you, because ye are not under the Law, but under Grace. 3. These frustrate the main end of Grace, which is set down Rom. 5. ult. That as Sin hath reigned unto Death, Grace might reign by Righteousness to eternal life. To abuse Grace, is the greatest Sin imaginable; and to despight the Spirit of Grace, is the Sin unpardonable, Heb. 10. 29. And if any are ungodly *καὶ ἄθεοι*, in God's Black-Book, as destined to condemnation, Jude, verse 4. they are such as turn the Grace of God into wantonness.

A fifth Doctrine much abused, is, That Doct. 5. *we are justified and saved by Faith alone*, That *we* which is most true and consonant to Scripture, Rom. 3. 28. Gal. 2. 16. Ephes. 2. 8. *are saved by Faith.* I will therefore believe, saith the careless Christian, and then hope I shall do well enough, though I have no good works, which I hear are excluded in those fore-cited Scriptures, in the matter of Justification: But know, O vain man, That Faith and Works are only opposed in the matter of Justification, but are never separated and parted. As the Eye and Ear are opposed in the matter of seeing; the Eye only sees, not the Ear; but where God gives Eyes, he gives Ears also: So to whom Grace is given to believe, it is given to

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to obey. Faith is not an idle, but active and operative Grace; *It works by love*, Gal. 5. 6. Is of a heart purifying nature, *Acts* 15. 9. It unites the Soul to Christ, so that Christ is said *to dwell in the Soul by Faith*, Ephes. 3. 16. And to live in the Soul, Gal. 2. 20. The right Epithete of true Faith, is *most holy Faith*, Jude, verse 20. His right property, is *sanctifying*, Acts 26. 28. True Faith is never solitary, but attended and known by her good many Companions, *Virtue*, 2 Pet. 1. 5. *Love*, Ephes. 1. 15. *Fear*, Heb. 11. 7. *Repentance*, Mark 1. 15. *Righteousness*, 2 Tim. 2. 22. *Obedience*, Heb. 11. 8. *Patience*, Heb. 6. 12. *Sanctification*, 2 Thess. 2. 13. *Good Works*, Tit. 3. 8. Her Exercises are holy Duties: Therefore we read of the *Prayer of Faith*, James 5. 15. *Living by Faith*, Heb. 11. 28. *Walking by Faith*, 2 Cor. 5. 7. And as to our spiritual warfare, it is of singular use; we read of the *fight of Faith*, 1 Tim. 6. 22. Relisting the Devil, quenching his fiery Darts, overcoming the World; and all by Faith. So that such know little of the nature of Faith, who dream that Faith hath nothing to do, but to look on a Promise, and sit still: Faith hath Promises, Conditions, Precepts, Threats; yea, all God's Word to look to. It hath Sins, Corruptions, Assaults, Temptations,

tations to look after and resist: It hath God, and good Works, and the life of Christ, Heaven, and heavenly-mindedness to look after. To Faiths charge and oversight, all Graces, Love, Repentance, Obedience, Fear, Patience, Humility, &c. all Duties, Prayer, Praise, Thankfulness, are committed. She the *Queen*, they her Train; she the Mother, they the Daughters: They all rise up, and call her blessed, and she, as the good Mother of the Family, giveth to them their appointed task of Employment, and seeth that none of them be idle.

6. The Doctrine of the Saints *Imper-* Doct. 6.
Of the
Saints Im-
perfecti-
ons.
fections goes a great way with many, and themselves will make the use to excuse their Enormities. Every one, the very best, have their failings, none is perfect; all the Saints had their Imperfections. But thou mayst read much of their Perfections also, if thou hast a mind to it; *Noah, Abraham, Job, Asa*, and many others were perfect, the Scripture witnesseth. *Paul* saith, All true Christians must endeavour after it, *Phil. 3.* It is commended, *Matth. 5. 48.* Exhorted too, *2 Cor. 13. 11.* Prayed for, *Heb. 13. 21.* *1 Pet. 8. 10.* We must therefore distinguish of Perfection; 1. There was an Original Perfection, *Eccles. 7. 29.* God made man perfect: This was, but is

K

not.

not. 2. There will be a future perfection, when we shall come to be among the Spirits of the just made perfect, *Heb.* 12. 23. This is not, but shall be. 3. There is a legal Perfection, such as the Law requires : This was in Christ, *Heb.* 5. 9. But is not to be found in any since the Fall, *Heb.* 7. 19. 4. There is an imaginary Perfection (self-reputed) such was in *Tyrus*, *Ezek.* 27. 3. & 28. 12. 15. And in *Laodicea*, *Rev.* 3. Of this there is too much. But 5. There is an Evangelical Perfection; and this is that which we should seek after. And this is 1. Imputative, as there is an imputed Righteousness, whereby Believers are made perfect by Christ's Righteousness imputed to them, *Ezek.* 16. 14. Thy Beauty was perfect, through my Comeliness which I had put upon thee : This is our best Perfection, and properly so called; thus every one that is perfect, shall be as his Master and Saviour, *Luke* 6. 40. By this *Job*, and other godly persons, were reputed perfect, *Job* 1. 1. 2. There is a Comparative Perfection; Thus *Noah*, *Gen.* 6. 9. was perfect in his Generations, thou he had no absolute perfection; yet compare him with other men, he might go for a perfect man: He did so out-shine them, as the Stars compared with the Sun are no Lights at all,

all, but compared with the other parts of Heaven, and much more with the clods of the Earth are glorious Lights. 3. There is a perfection of parts (an Inchoative Perfection) which is yet incomplete, but in a way to a complete perfection, and shall come to be perfected, *Phil.* 1. 5. *Col.* 1. 28. *Ephes.* 4. 12, 13. 4. As there is a perfection of Parts, so of Hearts, which next to that imputed is our best, and we may take greatest comfort in, *1 Chron.* 28. 9. Thus was *David* and *Asa* perfect, *1 Kings* 11. 4. *2 Chron.* 15. 17. 5. There is a perfection of way, that wherein the godly set themselves to walk; though sometimes they slack their pace, and walk not so evenly in it, *Psal.* 119. 7. & 101. 2. 6. There is a Perfection of Desires and Endeavours, a restless pursuit of perfection, forgetting what is behind, and pressing forward to the mark, *Phil.* 3. 12, 13. And herein stands the best of our perfection here below. Now to apply this to thee, who pleadest the Saints Imperfections, to justify thy sinful and lazy courses. See here are many Perfections, and thou hast never a one of them (unless the *Laodicean* self-conceited perfection) therefore no Saint sure. Excuse not thy self by their Imperfections any

more, except thou dost strive to out-go them, at least to equal them.

Doct. 7.

*We are not
under the
Law, but
under
Grace.*

7. Another Doctrine grounded on the Scripture, Rom. 6. 14. *That we are not under the Law, but under Grace*; is much abused: If not under the Law, saith the Libertine, why should I trouble my self to keep it, or be troubled if I break it? Understand therefore what that means, we are not under the Law: 1. It is understood of Believers, and such as are true Converts, that they are not under the Law, that is, the *irritation* of the Law, so as to be more *irritated* and incited by the curb and restraint which the Law lays upon us not to lust, to lust the rather; as we are apt to desire what is forbidden; as the Apostle is supposed to speak of himself while unregenerate, Rom. 7. 7, 8. But we *are under Grace*, which checketh and stoppeth that rebellious inclination, and the irritation of the Law. 2. That we are not under the *Curse of the Law*, Gal. 3. 13. but under Grace, which hath translated the Curse from us to Christ, who was *made a Curse for us*. 3. Nor under the *justification* of the Law (as well as the Curse or Condemnation) as sometimes *Adam* was before his Fall, who was to look for his justification and acceptance, from his obser-
vation

vation of the Law, he being then under the Covenant of Works (the Covenant of Grace not being spoken of till after the Fall.) In which respect Believers are now said to be *dead to the Law*, that they might live unto God. *Rom. 7.* 4. Nor are Believers under *the rigor* of the Law, so as that they cannot stand right in God's sight, if they come not up to the strict terms of the Law (when through infirmity they fail) but we are under a more easie Yoke, Grace doth mitigate and dispense with the *summum jus*, the rigor and severity of it, *Rom. 3. 20. Gal. 2. 19.* 5. Nor are Believers under the *Coaction* of the Law; the Law is not made for the Righteous in this sense, so as either to condemn, or compel him; but he is under Grace, which prompts and puts him on, out of a spirit of love, and a willing mind to a chearful Obedience. But because the Apostle saith, *We are not under the Law, but under Grace*; would you make the Law and Grace to jar? And the Doctrine of Grace and Practice of Sin to agree. The Apostle bids defiance to such an impious Inference, and, in a sort, disdains to give an Answer to this Objection; *Rom. 6.* but with abhorrence crys out, *God forbid. 14, 15.* And elsewhere positively affirmeth, That he never intended his Doctrine of Grace

should make void the Law, but establish it, to make it abide in full force and virtue.

Doct. 8. Another Doctrine and Scripture abused, *That we are to try all things.* 1 Thess. 5.

21. Hence saith the vain unstable man, I may go into all Companies, any Meeting; be present at any Idolatrous Service without scruple. But observe what follows, and you need no other Answer, *Hold fast that which is good, abstain from all appearance of Evil:* Therefore it is no more but this. Try all Doctrines, *believe not every Spirit;* but try all by the Word: So prove all things that *are probable* (or dubious) but lawful, and likely to be good, not such as have *an appearance of Evil.* So that this universal Particle (All) as in many other places, is to be taken with a limitation. 1. As to *Piety,*] All things consistent with it, but such are not the Doctrines of the *Arrians, Socinians,* the Worship of the *Mahometans, Papists, Quakers, &c.*

Rev. 2. 2. The Ephesine Church was commended for trying such as said they were Apostles, but found them to be Lyers; but then could not *bear them,* or give allowance to hear them. And further is commended, that she did (not try) but perfectly hate and

Verse 6. detest the *Doctrine of the Nicolaitans,* a
Pestilent

Pestilent and Licentious Sect. 2. *To Morality,*] All things consistent with Morality and good Manners, not such as are apparently Evil by the light of Nature; as the way of *Cain*, the courses of the Ranter, Adulterer, Libertine, &c. 3. As to thy *outward good,*] civil or natural; otherwise thou mightest try all Poysons, to see what is the force and operation of them, or try all Callings and Professions, and so be to day a Tradesman, to morrow a Divine, next day a Lawyer or Physician; to day a Tayler, to morrow a Carpenter, and so in *infinitum*, as well as take that liberty to tast and make tryal of all Sects, and different modes of Religion and Worship.

And in the last place (to name no more) 9. *Repent*
 It is *but repenting*, if all fail, and all is safe; *and be saved.*
 for Christ hath joyned *Repentance* and *Remission* of Sins together, *Luke 24. 47.* So that if Repentance go before, Pardon follows of course: The Lord hath promised, if we repent of the *Evil we have done*, he will repent of the *Evil he hath threatened*: *Jer. 18. 8.* And I purpose to repent at last, and then God will pardon. Oh that men should so dally with God's Promises and Threats, and Play with the Cockatrice, adventuring so near the brink of Hell, and think to come off safe. Such as these do presumptuously

2 Tim. 2.
26.

A. 5. 11.
18.

Lib. 3.
De peni-
tentia que
putatur
esse ipsius.

tuously promise themselves *two things*, which God doth no where promise. 1. The one is, that they *will repent*, as if it were in their own power, which is the pure and peculiar gift of God. Repentance is not the work of nature or free-will; not in the power of all Purposes, Vows, Resolutions; not in the power of Pain, Sickness, Death or Hell to work; not in the power of Creatures, Men or Angels to give; not in the power of all Ordinances, Fasting, Praying, Sermons or Sacraments to work. 2. The other is, they promise themselves to repent at Death, and that shall *serve their turn*, as well as if they had repented all their life. But God hath made no such promise to late Repentance, but threatned the contrary, *Prov. 1. 26, 27, 28. Hos. 5. 6.* There is a memorable Story of St. *Austin* to this purpose, which I have read; being once asked, What he thought of a man that had lived wickedly, but at his Death penitent, confessing and bewayling his sins, absolved, &c. What would you have me say (said he) That he is saved? No, I will not, because I would not deceive thee: What then? That he is damned? No, neither, because I dare not Judge him: What then shall I say? O Brother, if thou wilt be free from doubting, repent whiles thou art in health.

health. If thou wilt repent when thou canst not sin, thy sins have left thee, and not thou thy Sins. In another place again, it is not to be said how many this vain hope of *late Repentance* hath deceived and undone. Again, saith he, I have read the Scripture over and over, and I find not so much as one in the space of two thousand years saved by his Repentance at his end, except the Thief on the Cross. To *St. Austin*, I shall joyn a remarkable passage, or two of the learned Bishop *Andrews*, who Preaching at Court of Repentance, fell to discourse of late Repentance and seeking God, and hath these words, That that may be said about this, is this, and it is nothing, some one or two of a thousand, or ten thousands have; how then? shall not we therefore seek God before? Again, this time is the time when all Hypocrites, Atheists, Tag and Rag come in to seek him in a sort; and shall not we be confounded to see our selves in their number? Again, what is our seeking then? Is it not to lie still in our Beds, and suffer a few words to be spoken in our Ears, and have a little Opiate Divinity ministred to our Souls, and so sent away? and much more to this purpose. To these two so eminent Persons, I may add a third of Mr. *Greenham* (*St. Greenham*

Greenham Bishop *Hall* somewhere calls him) my Sentence is, saith that judicious Divine, that a man now lying at the point of death, having the fears and terrors of death now upon him, in that state of fear and pain, may have a sorrow for his life past; but because the weakness of the Flesh and the bitterness of Death doth most commonly procure it, we ought to suspect, &c.

There is no Promise, I said, that such Repentance shall be accepted; But I know what will be Replied, Though I have no Promise, I have an Example, *The Thief on the Cross*: And why may not I as well as he? *Answer*, This Example, as some other passages of Scripture concerning the falls and miscarriage of the Saints, is set for the fall and rising again of many, and is like some of those Scriptures which the unlearned and inconsiderate persons do wrest to their own destruction. But 1. Consider there is but one such Example in all the Bible, and this related but once, and by one only of the Evangelists (all four mentioning the dying of Christ between two Theeves) only *St. Luke* sets down this passage, the rest being silent: The Holy Ghost easily foresaw how apt we are to surfeit, even of a little of this
Honey :

Honey : One, we say, that none might despair ; But one, least any should presume.
 2. Consider at the same time you have an Example of another that died without Repentance ; therefore I may with much more reason retort this Argument. The one Thief did not, nay could not repent ; for God gave him not Repentance, but as he cast off God in his life, God cast him off at death : As he lived, he dyed, reviling, cursing , deriding, desparing ; thou hast therefore more cause to fear to be left with the one, then to hope to be taken with the other. There was then a Concurrence of a many the most stupendious Prodigies that the World ever beheld, the Sun at Noon-day loosing his light, the Air darkened, the Earth quaking, the Rocks rent, the Sun of God crying out *Eloi, Eloi, &c.* his fellow Thief now recanting; of an old Malefactor, and late scoffing Blasphemer, while upon the Cross, of a sudden a Penitent, a Convert, a Believer, a Confessor, a Preacher, a Prayer, preaching to him Repentance, praying to his Saviour for forgiveness ; yet all this wrought not upon him : The hard Rocks rent and cleft , but his more then rocky heart rent not ; His Bones, Arms and Legs, were broken, his heart unbroken. We may as well almost expect a second *Crucifying*

Mr. Dike. *cififying* of Chrift, faid one, as a *second Thief*; nay, I may fay, if there could be a *second Crucifying*, there might alfo be found a *second Impenitent Thief*. Some man (faid that great *Andrews*) going a Journey, hath found a Purfe of money by the way; were it not madnefs, in hope of like hap to us to leave our money behind us? hear Mr. *Greenbam* again: Befides this one, there is not one more in all the Bible; and for this one that fped, a thoufand thoufands have miſſed; and what folly is it to put our ſelves in a way, where ſo many have miſcarried: It is as if one ſhould ſpur his Aſſe till he ſpake, becauſe *Balaam's* Aſſe did once ſpeak; ſo groſſly doth Satan abuſe us, and our own folly blind us.

2. *Sundry
Observations.*

The remaining part of this Chapter is to ſpeak of ſundry *Observations* that many have made, whence they have gathered Excuses to confirm themſelves in their evil ways. As in the firſt place, *The quiet*

1. *The quiet
end of
ſome wicked
men.*

and peaceable end of ſome wicked men: I have obſerved, ſaith one, how good an end they have made, died like *Lambs*; I wiſh I may make ſuch an end my ſelf. *Answer*, Like *Lambs* indeed, like *Jeremy's Lambs*, Jer. 51. 39, 40. *They rejoyce and ſleep a perpetual ſleep, like Lambs led to the Slaughter*. Like *Lambs* indeed, as having neither apprehenſion

prehension of Death (*the second Death*) nor hope of *eternal* life. But when did you see a wicked or worldly man die like that *Lamb of God*, lifting up his Eyes to Heaven, praying with a Heart full of hope, joy, peace, assurance? saying, *John 17. 4. I have glorified thee on Earth, have finished the Work thou gavest me to do: Into thy Hands I commend my Spirit.* Or singing like that Swan, *2 Tim. 4. 6, 7, 8. I have fought a good Fight, finished my course, kept the Faith, there is now a Crown of Righteousness laid up for me, &c.* I am not secure about his eternal state, said *St. Austin*, that *Si securus hinc exit*, died secure of his own. Such may rather *ego non sum securus* be said to lie like Stocks and Stones; and to die like *Nabal*, whose heart was dead within him *ten dayes before he died, and became like a stone.* *1 Sam. 25.* It matters not much, said a godly Divine, Whether a godly man *Dr. Harris*, be in Heaven the day before his death, (his Understanding being clouded, his Faith assaulted) so he be there ever after; nor whether a wicked man be secure at and before his death, and descend from a Heaven of security, into a Hell of misery. There is no conclusion to be made from the Epilogue and last act of ones life; *Qualis vita, finis ita.* From the former course of his life, we may more rationally argue; according

Ans. 1. de cording to that of the Father, He cannot
Disc. Chris. dye ill, that lived well; nor well, that have
 6. 2. lived ill: You may possibly see some eminently godly person encountering the last Enemy with dread and horror, yet goes to Heaven, as they *Rev. 11. 12. In a Cloud*, or as *Elias* in a *Whirlewind and Storm*, 2 Kings 2. 11. while the wicked steal into Hell without noise. For my part, said that famous *Greenham*, speaking to one in distress in Sicknes (As I look for no great matters in my death for my self, so) I would not think the more hardly of you, if you should die in this discomfort; nor would I wish any to judge otherwise of God's Child in that state of death; for we shall not be judged according to that particular instant at our death, but the general course of our life. You may see much more to this purpose in our famous *Perkins*, *His right way to dying well*.

2. *The low parts of the Religious.*

Another is stumbled, and takes offence, as he pretends, at the mean *Condition*, and weak parts of those that are Religious, looking upon them as so many shallow heads. And it was not for nothing therefore when our Saviour had related, *That the Poor receive the Gospel*; that he added, *Blessed is he that is not offended in me*: In respect of his Followers. But shall we say, That
Lucian,

Math. 11. 6.

Lucian, *Porphiry* and *Julian*, and such
 atheistical Scoffers are the onely wits of
 the World? Tell me, if thou art able to
 Judge, and hast any Candor : If *St. Paul's*
Rhetorick in his Answers, and in his many
ex tempore Apologies, doth not equal or
 exceed his, who was Sir-named the *Orator*
(Tertullus). And not to mention his
 other Epistles, read and weigh that short
 one to *Philemon*, and tell me, If thou find-
 est any where better Oratory, such Flowers
 and Flouds of Eloquence? Were not those
 great Worthyes of their times, *Justin*
Martyr, *Clemens*, *Tertullian*, *Origen*, *Basil*,
Naxianzen, *Chrysostom*, *Austin*, *Jerom*, able
 to cope with, match, and over-match all
 the learned Opposers of Religion in their
 times? And will not any one that hath
 any favour of piecy, or fancy, confess our
Herbert to have as good a vein in Poetry,
 and to have as lofty strains as any of our
 frothy and wanton Poets? And hath not our
 Nation had as choice wits, and profound
 Schollars in all kind of Polite Literature
 as were to be found in the World again?
 Such our *Jewell*, *Perkins*, *Abbot*, *Andrews*,
Reynolds, *Whitaker*, *Davenant*, and those
 two great Luminaries, *Usher* and *Gataker*,
 (whom their very Adversaries admired for
 their Learning:) yet all not onely
 Champions

Champions for the Truth, but Exemplary for a strict and holy Life.

*Religion
doth not
raise men
to Riches,
&c.*

3. Another takes the like distaste, when he sees Religion not *accompanied with Riches, and outward Prosperity*; but the most Religious often in Straits, Wants, Trouble, Persecution; whereas our Preachers say, That godliness is so profitable to all things, *having the Promise of this Life, as well as that to come*; yet they see whatever the godly may meet with in another World, in this they fare not better, often worse than others. Is godliness the *great gain and contentment*, say they? we can find neither the one nor the other: True, if we call Riches, Honour, Preferments, the great gain, and contentment to consist in a brutish, Epicurean satisfying the Flesh: These the godly count but petty gains, and little contentment in them. But his gains are Pardon of Sin, Interest in Christ, the Favour of God, the Comforts of the Holy Ghost, Riches of Grace, Peace of Conscience, a Title to, and Assurance of, a heavenly Crown: These are with him the true and great Gain, and the matter of his Contentment; which is no where to be found, but in the Courts of Godliness; not in the Courts of Princes, or Palaces of Prelates. You may have one King say,

Utinam

Utinam nunquam Regnasset; so did *Philip* the Second say, *Would I had never been a King*; yet had he many Kingdoms came tumbling in upon him; he had received 564 millions, he said, But had no Contentment, but *Cordolium*, hearts grief from all. You may hear another, a Pope say, *Would I had never been Pope*; so did *Adrian* the Sixth, who said, His exaltation to the Papacy, was the greatest unhappiness that ever befel him: And another of them said, The higher he rose in Greatness and Preferments, the farther off he was from Contentment, and hopes of Salvation; when I was an inferiour Church-man, said he, I had good hopes of my Salvation, when raised to a Bishoprick, I was full of doubts and fears; but when made Pope, I did utterly despair.

4. Another Objecteth, and hereby excuseth himself (while he is of no Religion or Conscience at all himself) that we have so many Divisions, that he knows not with what Party to joyn: An old Cavil and Reproach cast upon the ways of God. The Heathens would hit the Christians in the Teeth with this, You Christians worship but one God, and can't agree; we worship many, and yet agree. It is to be confessed, and sadly bewailed, that there are too many

The Divi-
sions among
Christians.



L

Divisions

Divisions in these our dayes; yet not to be so much wondered at, if we consider how it is Satan's grand Policy (as not to be divided against himself, so) it is his greatest Artifice to disseminate and foment as many Divisions among others as he can. 2. What

Dr. Potter. a learned Divine said in this case, viz. It is a great vanity to hope, or expect, that all learned men in this life should absolutely consent in all the pieces and particles of Divine Truth. The light whereby we see in this state of mortality, is feeble and very different, in regard of the good spirits illumination, the capacities of men, their diligence in Study, Prayer, and other means of Knowledge. There were differences in the Apostles times; In the Church of *Corinth*, one saying, *I am of Paul*, another, *I of Apollo*. Divisions in the Church of *Rome*, which the Apostle warns them of, and to avoid: And in the present Church of *Rome* (howsoever she Vaunts and Vapors of her Unity, and upbraids us with our Divisions, which she and her Emissaries have occasioned, procured and seek to perpetuate) are as many and far more momentous differences, then among all Protestants whatsoever; and have been managed with as much bitterness of Spirit, and Invectives one side against

1 Cor. 3.
Rom. 16.

against another; the Jesuits against the Dominicans, the Seculars against the Jesuits, &c. as ever they have written against Protestants. There is not a Controversie between them and us, but the same is controverted by some of theirs, as *Bellarmino* doth plainly confess. Besides, there is a *German* Doctor, who hath collected out of *Bellarmino* himself Two hundred thirty seven Contradictions, and set them down in his own words, as my Authour tells me. There are differences among us, but not about the great and weighty Points of Religion, which are in Scripture laid down plainly and clearly, but Circumstantial, and matters of more Intricacy and Speculation; where yet an unity of Faith and Love may be maintained, under a diversity of Opinion; yet are all agreed against Popery on the one hand, and Prophaneness on the other. There is difference of Opinion among Physicians, yet all agree an Hectick is no good Constitution, a Plurisie, Feavor, Consumption, are dangerous Diseases, and not to be slighted: Difference among Lawyers, yet all agree Treason, Felony, Murder, are Capital Crimes. So difference among this and that Party, but all agree in condemning Popery as Idolatrous, and prophane Ignorance, and contempt of God

See Dr. Potter's Answer to Char. mistaken, C. 7.

and godliness, to be destructive of Salvation.

*The bad
lives of
some Mi-
nisters.*

5. But one thing more, say some, I am troubled at, and it much confirms me in my way; I see many Ministers that can Preach well, who live but badly; and sure if there were such need of strictness, they who know so much, and speak so well, would be careful to practice it. *Answer*, Woe to the World because of Offences, but woe and woe again to them by whom the Offence cometh. If *Elie's* Sons be *Sons of Belial*, they make the Lord's People to *transgress*; and some to *abhor the Sacrifices of the Lord*. And who seriously reflecting on this, can chuse but cry out with the Prophet Jer. 23. 9. *My heart within me (bleeds) is broken, because of the Prophets, all my Bones shake*, verse 11. *For both Prophet and Priest are prophane,—They commit Adultery, and walk in Lies: They strengthen the hands of evil Doers, that none doth return from his wickedness.*— And after, *from the Prophets of Jerusalem is prophaneity gone in to all the Land*. But our blessed Saviour hath directed what to do in such a case; what they bid you observe; that observe and do: But do not after their works, for they say and do not. But though some are so, blessed be God all are not: There are many that are like their Master, *Acts* 1. 1.

Say-

1 Sam. 2.
12, 17.

Jer. 23.
9. 11. 14.
15.

Mat. 23. 2.

Sayers and Doers, who teach by Life as well as Doctrine; And can say with the Apostle, Thou hast fully known my Doctrine, manner of Life, Purpose, Faith, Long-suffering, Charity, Patience, 2 Tim, 3. 10. Yea, who can appeal higher; ye are witnesses and God also how holily, justly and unblamably we have had our Conversation amongst you.

Thus Reader have we done with those Excuses of the first sort, viz. as to Sin: I shall more briefly dispatch the other two remaining, and now come to speak of Excuses as to Duty.

CHAP. VII.

Excuses as to Duty.

HAVING spoken of those Excuses as to *Excuses as Sin*, taken from our selves and to *Duty*, others: I come to speak of those which relate to *Duty*, whereof the first is, *Parvulus* 1. *Childsum*, I am a Child; It was *Jeremy's* excuse, when called to Prophecy and Preach, *Jer. 1. 6. Ah Lord, saith he, I cannot speak, for I am a Child*: It is true, he might with more shew of reason plead this, in relation

to such an extraordinary Service, then our Children (or we in their behalf) to be excused from ordinary Duties belonging to them. We are apt to say, Would you have me teach a Child? Catechise a Child? teach a Child to pray, and make him a Hypocrite? They have day and time before them, let them Play, and do as Children; And have they not Death and Hell before them too? *Train up a Child*, saith the Lord, *in the way of his Youth, and he will keep it when he is old.* And again, who so fit to be taught as these, *Esay 28. 9. Whom shall he teach Knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand Doctrine? them that are weaned from the Milk, and drawn from the Breast.* Gracious Timothy was grounded in the Scripture, when a Child, by his religious Mother and Grand-mother. And Solomon tells us, what Lessons he had given him by his Father and Mother, *Prov. 4. 3, 4.* Our Saviour bids us to bring our little Children to him, for of such so brought up is the Kingdom of Heaven. We read of Children believing in Christ, *Matth. 18. 6.* Of little Children knowing the Father, *1 John 2. 13.* Therefore doth that aged Disciple direct his Epistle to his little Children, as well as to the young Men and aged Fathers. Our greatest care should be of

our

Prov. 22.
6.

2 Tim. 1.
5. & 3. 15.

Mark 10.
14.

our young Children, they are *Spes Gregis*, the hope of the next Generation: We break the Colt when young, bend the Twig, and twist it while green; We swath and swaddle the Bodies of our Children, when small and tender, to keep them strait; and then, if ever, is the time to frame and form their Spirits, to prevent ill habits. The lameness or crookedness in the Cradle (as in *Mephibosheth*) is hardly, if ever cured; much less are ill Principles to be rooted out, that were suckt in when Children. He who had been so from a Child, was past Disciples Cure, *Mark 9. 21.* The young Disciple usually wears the Garland, and proves the most useful and eminent aged Father: *My Soul desireth the first Ripe* Mic. 7.1. *Fruit*, saith the Prophet. The most eminent Saints and choicest Instruments in God's Church, have been usually such as have been trained up in Pious Education, called and sanctified in their Infancy, or Childhood, as young *Samuel, Solomon, Josiah, Jeremy, John Baptist, Timothy, &c.* of old: And some such Instances we have of late, That incomparable *Usher* for one, of whom it may be said,

Multa tulit, fecitq; puer, sudavit & alfit.

He could speak of his being in Christ from *ten years* of age, then was he converted, and what a blessed Instrument of much good was he not to many particular Persons and Congregations where he came and preached; but as a Star of the first magnitude his light did shine not only all over the Horizon of these two great Islands of *Great Britain* and *Ireland* (his Native Country) to which he was so great a glory, but his Name and Memory is pretious to all the Churches in the *European* World. But above all that example above all examples of our blessed Saviour, when but a Child of Twelve years, who was so increased in Knowledge and Wisdom, that he ~~was~~ among the Doctors in the Temple, hearing and putting forth his Questions to their astonishment and admiration. And that saying of his in answer to his Mother, worthy to be printed in the Breasts of all hopeful Children, and be inscribed in the Frontispiece of all their Books, *I must now be about my Fathers business.* And he was not yet come into the Teens, was but Twelve years of age then.

Luke 2:
49.

A second

A second makes the like excuse when his ^{2. *un-*} duty is laid before him, and saith, *Non* ^{*learned,*} *sum Doctus*, as he to whom the Book was given and bidden to read, answered, I cannot, ^{Essay 29.} for I *am not learned*; I am a Lay-man, ^{12.} a poor Mechanick, Illiterate, what would you have of me? should I meddle with Scripture matters? Duties of Religion? Would you have me instruct my Family, pray, give thanks at Meat? It is for Ministers, Schollars, and the learned, to deal in such matters, saith the ignorant Papist and the lazy Protestant. But our Saviour biddeth the Laity as well as the learned Priests, *Search the Scriptures*. And St. Paul ^{Joh. 5. 39.} exhorteth all Christians, that the *Word of* ^{Col. 3. 16.} *God should dwell in them richly in all Wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another, &c.* The most eminent Saints in God's ^{Acts 4. 13.} Calendar were sometimes illiterate men, Fishermen, Publicans, Plebeians, &c. But after they had been conversant with Jesus, they were taught and enabled of God, and made fit for every good work: They who are not Book-learned, may be *Christ-learned*. *Austin* said in his time, *Surgunt* ^{Conf. 1. 8.} *indocili & rapiunt Regnum celorum.* ^{c. 8.} The unlearned rise up and get the start of us, the learned of the World, and break into Heaven with a holy Violence, while we with
our

our learning and disputes lie weltring in the mire. Think not therefore want of Book-learning may excuse thee from all common Duties of Christianity. There is not one Heaven for Schollars, and another (or none at all) for the unlearned : In an Army you see all are not Commanders and Commission-Officers, but the greater number common Souldiers, upon whose hands the great shock and brunt of the Battell lies ; So in God's Host (the Church-militant) all are not Divines and Pastors, but the greatest part of Christ's Flock consists of ordinary, and many of them unlearned Christians. In the Catalogue of Martyrs in *Queen Mariæ* dayes, the total is summed up to amount to 260, whereof five were Bishops, one and twenty Doctors, eight Gentlemen, but the greatest part by far was of the meaner rank ; eighty four Artificers, an hundred Husbandmen, Servants and Labourers ; fifty five Women, Maids, Wives and Widows.

Huywoods.
Elizabeth.

3. *want of*
Parts.

Exod. 4.
10.

A third little differing from the former, is, *I want Parts, and sufficient Abilities.* This was *Moses* his excuse, O Lord I pray thee have me excused, I am not *Vir verborum*, I am not eloquent ; I pray let it be done by some better hand. So plead some Masters of Families, had I the Gift and Ability

Ability of some others, I would pray, and set up Religious Exercises in my Family; but I want expression, and that discourageth me. So it may be some Ministers, I should Preach more frequently and more chearfully, had I the gifts and utterance of some *Paul* or *Apollos*: God's work would not be done negligently, they say. True, but if it be done faithfully, seriously and sincerely, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what a man hath not. We find by experience God doth often bless the Endeavors of conscientious Masters of Families to a great measure of promoting and spreading Religion all over the Family; and as oft the Labours of some his faithful (though less eminent) Ministers, to the conversion and building up of more then some of the chief Master-Builders: As if the Lord would say, *Not by Might, nor by Power, Zach. 4. 6. but by my Spirit*; And as if he would have us say again, *Who is Paul?* and what is *Apollos*? It is God alone who gives the increase. *1 Cor. 3.*

4. The *Calling* is the fourth excuse from Duty, of which also somewhat was spoken before, and is that which is alledged in the Parable, which gave us the matter of this Discourse. My Calling, my honest Employments

ployments must be looked after ; I must
 go try my Oxen, I must go take possession
 of my Land purchased : Reasonable and
 just Excuses one would think, no contempt,
 nor defiance. They stood not idle in the
 Market, nor were in Tavern or Ale-house
 tipling : I pray have me excused was the
 worst Language they gave , yet rejected.
 The third said, I have married a Wife,
 and must consummate the Marriage, *I can-*
not come. None said, I will not ; yet is
 their slighting recorded, and all three re-
 jected. No Employment, no change of
 Condition, can privilege from attending
 God's Service : One thing is necessary
 stands alwayes indispensably true ; the
 other might be done, this must not be left
 undone. There was a Dispensation in the
 old Law, That if a man had new married
 a wife, he should not be pressed to war that
 year ; but no Dispensation for omitting
 the Service of God for one day. The
 King by his Place, and by reason of the
 weighty Affairs incumbent on his Office, be
 thought fit to be privileged above any
 others (as being Superior to all, and Infe-
 rior only to God ;) yet *must* is for the
 King, and *shall* from his Superior : He was
 commanded by God , that when he sate
 upon the Throne, he *shall write* him a Copy
 of

Deut. 24.
 51

Deut. 17.
 18, 19

of the Law, and it *shall be* with him, and he *shall read* therein all the dayes of his life, &c. Thus did holy *David*, who made it his meditation continually, and by his being so continually versed therein, he became wiser then his Teachers: And besides his many private Devotions, the Psalms, Hymns and Prayers of his own composing, he was a constant Student in God's Word. We read of that Renowned Successor of his, *Josiah*, that he took the Book of the Law, and *himself read it* to all his People. *Luther* tells of that pious and valiant Duke of *Saxony*, that he had six of his Gentlemen who attended him, read daily to him six hours out of the holy Scripture. And never to be forgotten is the practise of one of the Kings of this Nation, King *Alfred*, who divided the four and twenty hours of the natural day into three parts, allowing himself eight hours for his bodily refreshment by Sleep, Food and Recreation; a second eight hours he spent in Reading, Praying and Writing; and the third eight he spent in attending Affairs of State, hearing Causes, &c. A rare example of a pious Prince, and one that would give account of his time spending.

Psal. 119.
27. 99.

2 Kings
23. 2. 1

5. *Hereaf- ter, not yet.* 5. But the great and general excuse is, *Nondum venit hora, I will hereafter*; but the time is not yet come. This was not the Answer of one single Person, but *Vox Populi*,
 Hag. 1. 2. The People said, *The time is not yet come, the time to build the house of the Lord.* So generally when we call upon men to repent, and amend their lives, they put us off, and say, It is a good work, and must be thought upon, and they will wait for a good hour to do it in. Thus in another sense Christ
 John 7. 6. may say, *My time is not yet come*; but your time is alway ready; your time to build your own Houses is come, is present, mine is future, must stay: But, saith the Lord, have I not met with you in your wayes? *Ye have sown much, and reaped little*; I have blown upon it, & what ye had was put into a Bag with holes; and why, because you ran so eagerly to build your own Houses, and my House lies wast. This is the common and most dangerous Excuse; and too many instances we have in our daily experience:
 Mr. Cal- Few go to Hell, said a good Divine, for my. saying they will not repent, but many for saying they will, but not yet. This was
 Prov. 6. the Sluggard's Plea, Yet a little more sleep, 11. a little more slumber. This was *delaying*
 Acts 14. Felix his Plea, I will take a more convenient 25. *season*, which he never had. This the put-off

off of Two in one Chapter, called by Christ, the one desired respite, till he had discharged his last office to his aged Father, Lord suffer me first to bury my Father : The Luke 9. other, Let me go bid my Friends farewell : 59, 61. But for all, we read they both bad Christ farewell, and lost the fair season of Grace. Alas, how do many dally with Repentance and Salvation, and sport themselves with their own Deceivings. The young man is ready to make large Promises, what he will do when he is old : The single, or unsetled, man, what he will do when he is settled : The man in Health, what he will do in Sicknes : And he in Sicknes, what he will do when restored to Health ; and all but words. Sick-Bed Purposes are deceitful, and Death-Bed Repentance as uncertain : First, Whether it shall be granted. Secondly, Whether it shall be accepted. The present tense is the acceptable tense, the future is the rejected tense : Many shall seek to enter, and shall not be able, Luke 13. 24. Shall and will seek, but have not heretofore, or do not yet. The *Sponsalia de presenti* make the Marriage good, *De futuro* signifie nothing. In Christianity the more hast the better speed; yet alas how sad is it to consider the most of men do delay & delay, adjourn, and put off Repentance and Obedience

dience *De die in diem*, from day to day, as young *Austin* (then no Saint) did with his *Noli modo*, Not yet Lord, spare me a little : He was afraid, as he said, he should be heard too soon. But at length it pleased God to awaken him thoroughly out of this Lethargy, and then he gets him into a private place, under such a Tree, and there he leaves his *modo & modo*, and cries out with a flood of tears, How long, O Lord ! how long ! Oh let there be an end of my sinful course, and a new Spirit given me now, now ; *Cur non modo Domine, non cras, cras, sed hac hora, &c.* Lord I do not say, nor do thou say to morrow, or next day : But Lord, *why not now, this very day ; yea, this very hour ?* The great Heroes of the World that are eternized in the Book of Fame, as *Cæsar, Alexander*, and our Christian Chieftain *Scanderbeg*, carried all before them by their Celerity and Expedition. Of *Cæsar* it is said, *Omnia confecit celeritate*, He brought all his ends about by his continual speed. Of *Alexander* (whose Motto was, *μὴ δὲν ἀνακαλλόμενος*, Lose no time, defer not,) That he was wont to make such long and speedy Marches day and night, that he surprized his Enemies, and was upon them before they could make resistance ; and the like did *Scanderbeg* : And the two former fought

-Conf. l. 9.
e. 12.

fought only for corruptible Crowns, the later for to save and deliver his Country. Why should we not use the same diligence, setting aside all dangerous delays to save a Soul, and gain a Crown incorruptible?

6. Others must be excused, that they are not so forward in wayes of holiness and strictness from *want of Company*, at least such as they most desire should go along with them. This was Barak's excuse to *Jud. 4.8.*
Deborah, If thou wilt go with me, I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go.
 It is true, good company is ever good; and it were much to be wisht, that as the wicked joyn hand-in-hand, so the godly did joyn heart-in-heart; As the one assemble themselves by troops in Harlots Houses, so that the godly did flock together as Doves to their Windows. But the World is not yet so good (God grant it may mend) that the strait way to Heaven should be over-thronged: Holy *Jeremy Jer. 15.* was fain to sit alone: And before him, ho-
ly Elias walked alone, not a Prophet or a
 godly Person that he knew of left. But
 the Saints must not look to march and move in a Military posture, all move, stand, stir, turn, and go together, as one man, when the Word is given: But must be content to move, as the Sun in his own

proper Orb, when there is not a Star to be seen accompanying it. This made *Noah* so shine in the old World, and *Lot* in *Sodom*. He that will not be content to go to Heaven alone, will hardly ever come thither.

7. Fear of
sufferings.

7. And not a few in such times and places, where the Church is under Persecution, desire to be excused, though they think well of Christ and his way, from the *Discouragements* they must meet with, and fear of *Persecution*. And blame us not, if we love not Persecution, say they, Life, Liberty, and Estates are sweet. This was the Sluggards old note, *There is a Lyon in the way*, I shall be torn in the Streets. But thus did not *Daniel* say, nor those Primitive Christians, when it was no more but so, *Christianos ad Leones, ad Flammas*; Away with these Christians, these Fanaticks, Contemners of our Laws, Disturbers of our Peace; for so they were then accounted; away with them to the Lyons. They feared not Death, but Hell; not to Burn, but Sin: They feared not loss of Places, Dignities, Honours or Life, but of Heaven. *Jovinian, Valentinian*, and some others resigned up their Commissions and places of Command, rather then they would comply with that Apostate *Julian*
in

Prov. 22.
13.

in his Idol-worship. Neither were those holy Martyrs in *Queen Marie's* dayes so tender of their Skin, their Ease, Liberty, Life and all, when the World began to wander after the Beast again; They loved not their life unto the death, that they might obtain a better Resurrection. Those words of Christ sounded lowder in their Ears, If any will come after me, *Let him take up his Cross and follow me*: He that will save his life (by denying, or being ashamed of me) shall lose it: But he that shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel, the same shall save it. What that noble *Istai* the *Gittite* said once to *David* in a day of general Revolt, they have said to Christ, *In what place my Lord the King shall be, whether in life or death, there will we thy Servants be.*

Rev. 12⁹

11.

Heb. 11.

35.

Luke 9.

28.

2 Sam. 15.

21.

8. Some other haply may be deterred from relinquishing his former wayes, upon point of Reputation, and little Punctillicies of Honour; his name should now be blasted. This was *Zedekiah's* excuse, when *Jeremy* did so earnestly obtest and press him to submit to the *Caldean*, and so save Life, City, Kingdom, and all; *Obey, I beseech thee the Voice of the Lord, and thou shalt surely live, and thy House and this City shall not be burnt, &c.* Oh, saith he, I cannot

8. Terms

of Honour.

Jer. 38. 17,

19.

Jonah 4.
2.

do it in point of Honour, for I fear the *Jews*, which are fallen away to the *Caldeans*, *that they will mock me*. Thus, in a Bravado, he chose rather to persist in his obstinacy and perish, then save himself by any shew of relenting and submission. And a much better man then he tells us what it was that stuck with him, when he was so backward to engage in that Service the Lord put him upon, *viz. Jonab the Prophet, Was not this my saying*, said he, *when I fled to Tarshish? for I knew thee to be a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and ready to forgive, and repentest of the evil*, q. d. I must go and tell the *Ninevites*, God will destroy them, and may be they may repent, and then be spared; what shall then become of my Honour? I shall be branded for a false Prophet: Therefore Lord destroy either them or me; them, that my Honour may be saved; or me, that I may not out-live my own Reputation. Poor passionate *Jonab*! that couldst be more content that God should lose the Glory of his Mercy, then thou the Honour of thy Ministry. But whosoever thou art, that canst not be content to lay thine Honour in the dust, and break in pieces this golden Calf, stamping it to powder, know, thou art not one whose deservest thy name to be

be listed among Christ's Schollars, whose very first Lesson they must learn, is *Humility and Self-denial*.

9. Again, there is that think themselves ^{9. They are} excused from any further pursuit of holiness, upon this supposition, that they are ^{well al-} *well already*. Such was the young man's ^{ready.} case, who said to our Saviour, *All these* ^{Mar. 19.} *have I kept from my youth*; that was his ^{20.} conceit of himself, who knew but a little of the out-side of the Law, and nothing of the in-side of his own Heart. Thus the *Pharisee* justified himself for his external ^{Luke 18.} Performances, condemning the *Publican*, ^{11, 12.} notwithstanding his inward Contrition. *Laodicea* was sick of this Disease, Who ^{Rev. 3. 17.} reckoned her self Rich, increased with Goods, and wanting nothing; when indeed she was poor, miserable, blind and naked. This is as dangerous a case as any, *Ubi dixti sufficit, peristi*, said St. *Austin*, When thou sayest I am well enough, thou art gone: There is more hope of a Fool than of this man, so wise in his own conceit, *Prov. 26. 12.*

10. Another excuseth himself from per- ^{10. It is} forming some part of his Duty, alledging, ^{no part of} *It is no part of his Calling*: And if it be so ^{my Call-} indeed, it is a just Excuse. It was *Cain's* ^{ing.} plea once, *Am I my Brothers Keeper?* So ^{Gen. 4 9.}

do others, when, in their company, they hear others swear, curse, rail, or do any other evil act, and never reprove them for it, say, *Am I my Brothers Keeper?* It is enough for me to look to my self; I am no Preacher; it is no part of my Calling. I pray whose Calling is it, if an Ox or Ass fall into a Pit to lift it out? It is thine, it is every mans; and is the eternal life of a Man of less value, then of a Sheep appointed to the Shambles? He that goes not about to hinder, is a partaker. Remember he that *disclaimed* himself to be his Brothers Keeper, in that *proclaimed* himself his Brothers Murderer. Have no fellowship in the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them: There is thy Calling to be thy Brothers Keeper; Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke him, and not suffer Sin upon him: There is thy Calling again to be thy Brothers Keeper.

Eph. 5. 11.

Lev. 19.

17.

11. *Despair of success.*

11. Another's excuse is, *Despair of success*: And as I said of the former, if thou couldst make this out, thou mightest be excused. But so it is not, nor can be, if thou wilt not wilfully cast away thy self, holding fast thy sin, and forsaking thy own mercy, refusing to come to Christ, who is able and ready

Jonah 2.
2.

ready to save to the utmost all that come Heb. 7. 25.
 to God for mercy through him : Yet was
 this the lazy Servants excuse, I presumed
 thee to be a hard Master, I might sow and Mat. 13.
 not reap, use my Indeavours, yet lose my 24.
 labour ; I therefore feared, and hid my Ta-
 lent. I may say to such, as Christ to the
 Pharisees, Full well ye reject the Com-
 mands of God, to hold fast your own
 Traditions ; So do these reject the Grace
 of God, to stick fast to their own Preju-
 dice. But these take the ready to make
 sure their own Condemnation in a most ir-
 rational way. When was it ever known
 that any Malefactor, desirous to preserve
 his life, would stand mute ? or wilfully cast
 away himself by flying out against the Law
 or Judge ? But will make his plea to obtain
 favour, cast himself upon God and his
 Country, and sue and intreat that he may
 have the benefit of any clause in the Law, or
 former Presidents in like case, and so he
 comes off safe. But these, as it were, in
 contempt of God's mercy *stand mute*, will
 not plead, nor pray the benefit of the Law
 (the Gospel of Christ I mean) nor desire
 they may have the same favour that *former*
Presidents have had, the greatest Offenders
 pardoned upon submission ; but wilfully
 cast away themselves, as if God, the Father

of Mercies, were inexorable, and their Condemnation peremptorily, and irrevocably determined. Thus sometimes have some right godly Christians behaved themselves under their spiritual distress, by reason of extreme melancholy, dreadful assaults of Satan, and sad desertion for a time, &c. concluding there was no hope, when yet all was safe. Famous is the Story of Mrs. *Anne Honywood*, who was in that distress of Spirit, and so possessed with an immoveable perswasion of her eternal Damnation, that she said to a worthy Minister who was with her, endeavouring to comfort her, That it was no more possible for her to escape damnation, then for that Venice-Glass, which she had then in her hand, not to be broken, if it fell to the ground; she let it fall, it rebounded to the Wall, and was taken up whole. The Lord might have left her in her sad misapprehensions, but to confirm her, and warn others by her example, was pleased, in that miraculous manner, to confute her fears. Somewhat like to this is the story of Mrs. *Katherine Bretterg*, a pious Gentlewoman, who for some time was under such distress, doubting of her Salvation, that she often wisht, She had never been born, or, that she been any other Creature then a Woman,

Woman, crying out often, *Woe is me* a miserable, woful, forsaken Creature, with abundance of Tears : She sometimes durst not pray, but said, I may not pray, I may not pray ; but it pleased God at last not only to bring her out of her fears and distress, but to give her strong assurance of her Salvation, that she dyed in much peace, and full of Joys unspeakable and glorious. I may add to these two (to spare more instances in this kind) the example of Mr. *John Glover*, of whom Mr. *Fox* in his Martyrology speaks, who was persuaded he *had sinned against the Holy Ghost* ; and was in that Distress for five years, that had he been in Hell he could not have despaired more ; he was so macerated and worn away, that he neither in that time took quiet rest, nor could brook Meat or Drink, or any outward comfort : But after all this was delivered, and such a frame of holiness and measure of comfort was wrought in him, that he seemed to live altogether a celestial life. This may call to our minds that of the Apostle, *If the Righteous be scarcely saved, where shall the Ungodly and Sinner appear ?* And that of St. Paul, *Rom. 11. 32.* God hath shut up all in Unbelief, that he may have mercy upon all. Where you may observe two strange

Doctrines

1 Pet. 4:
13.

Doctrines backed with a more strange Reason; 1. That not one here and there, but *all are shut up in Unbelief*. This is the common case of all Christians (one time or other) to be shut up in this Dungeon. This poor tempted Creatures think strange; the next is stranger. 2. That *God shuts them up* in unbelief; God is their Keeper all this while, and not Satan, as they are apt to conclude: God shuts them up, as *Joseph did Simeon*, for their Humiliation and Tryal: Unbelief is God's Prison (I may say in this sense) Presumption is Satans. 3. The reason is *strangest* of all, That he may *have mercy upon all* such, *viz.* That they may see their need of Mercy, fly to it, cast themselves upon it; as did holy Mr. *Perkins* dying, cry, Mercy, mercy is all I want; and God may have the whole glory of it, and they may the more admire the Wisdom of God in this dispensation, when he shall enlarge them; as *Josephs* Brethren did, when he spake no more roughly to them as formerly, but declared his relation to them, and testified his brotherly love. But all this while, there is no place for despair to all such as wait upon God, and rely on his mercy.

The last excuse I shall mention in this kind, is, of some whose meaning is better
then

then their understanding, an *excess of Humility*, who, when invited, hold off from their duty by a voluntary (but no wayes commendable) humility. Thus did the Centurion excuse himself from a receiving of Christ, *I am not worthy thou shouldst come under my Roof.* This is the case of many a gracious Soul, who, by reason of some scruples, keep off from receiving Christ in his Sacrament, when thou art the person Christ calls; *Ho every one that thirsteth, come to the Waters, buy Wine and Milk without money, and without price:* Thou thinkest thy money, preparation, and price of indignity would make thee more welcome, but it is not so. Thou sayest, I dare not come, I have not the purification of the Sanctuary; I shall eat and drink my damnation, if I eat unworthily. Know therefore, there is a *legal* worthiness, this thou canst not have; and an *Evangelical* worthiness, which may consist with the legal unworthiness. Do in this case as the *Levites* of old, when they came to the Passover, they were *ashamed, and sanctified themselves*, 2 Chron. (the more ashamed, the better sanctified; 30. 15. and the more sanctified, the more ashamed ever) and came with this Prayer, *The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek the Lord, though he be not*
pre-

*Excess of
humility.*

Mat. 8. 8.

Esay 55.
1, 2.

2 Chron.
30. 15.

prepared according to the purification of the Sanctuary. And there never was a more solemn and happy Passover kept for many Ages, it is said. Remember thou worthless Sinner, Christ was wont to eat and drink with *Publicans and Sinners*; *Humility* is the best part of the *Wedding-Garment*: Thou couldst not be at all worthy, if thou thoughtest thy self so. Our best dress in self-preparation and self-worthiness, would be like *Joshua's* Robes, filthy Garments, and Satan might then be at thy right hand. Thy best worthiness is self-unworthiness and self-abhorrence, no welcomer Guest to Christ, then a weeping and mourning *Mary Magdalene*, such shall sup with Christ, and he with them; And he will say to such, as to her, *Go in peace, thy Sins are forgiven thee.*

CHAP. VIII.

Excuses as to Faith and Believing.

I Come now to the last kind of Excuses, *Excuses as to Faith.* And these are as many as either of the former, whereof I shall give you a taste only. These are as dangerous as either of the other two, and as prejudicial to Peace, as they to Grace and Holiness: But these fall out often to be the case of the best of God's Servants here, who when they have escaped the *Pit* of open and gross Sins, are in danger of being taken in the *snare* of spiritual Wickedness, whereof this is a chief, *Unbelief*. The Sin of the whole *World*, John 16. 8. Of God's *People*, Rom. 11. 32. *All Israel* fell into it, and fell by it in the *Wilderness*, Heb. 3. ult. *Moses* and *Aaron* charged with it, and punished for it, Numb. 20. 12. This makes sad breaches between God and his *People* often; and we had need take the more heed of it, because we are apt to flatter our selves in it, and think we do what in reason and duty becomes us.

1. From
the great-
ness of the
thing pro-
mised.

1. *Moses* is a sad instance of humane frailty in this kind, *Numb.* 11. 22. Who, when the Lord promised to furnish a Table in the Wilderness with Flesh and Fowl for all *Israel* for a moneth together, had his Faith staggered, and did upon the matter say, Lord excuse me, *How can this be?* A moneth is a great while, and Six hundred thousand are a great many mouths; I knew thee to be Almighty, and were it for a Meal, I could easily perswade my self to believe it; or if it were for a moneths-board of a few thousands; but Lord they are Six hundred thousand men, besides as many more Women and Children. Why *Moses*, Is the Lord's hand shortned, because it is marvelous in thy Eyes, is it so also in mine? *Zach.* 8. 6. Alas, how often do we in our outward straits distrust and limit God: I have such a great charge, and small means, a little Oyl and Meal in the Vessel to take to; *Can God furnish a Table in the Wilderness?* And in respect of our spiritual estate, we are as apt to limit God's Mercy, as others his Power in respect of their outward state. He can forgive the hundred Pence; but can he, will he forgive the ten thousand Talents? Can all sin, my sin, and blasphemy be forgiven? yea, saith Christ, *Mat.* 12. 31. For God's

God's thoughts are not as thy thoughts, nor his Wayes as thy Wayes, *Esay* 55. 7, 8.

2. As Faith is sometimes nonplust (overplust I may say) with the *greatness* of the thing promised, so sometimes with the *goodness*; we think it too good to be true. 2. The thing promised too good.

Thence it was that *Sarah* laughed, upon the tydings of a Son to be born of her in her old age: It was a kind of unbelieving Smile, as if she had almost said in her heart, as that good *Shunamite* did in-like case, *Nay, my Lord, do not lye unto thy Hand-Maid*, *2 Kings* 4. Gen. 18. 12.

3. Sometimes we reckon our selves too bad, altogether unworthy; as the Centurion put by Christ from coming to him, *I am not worthy*, &c. Indeed were we upon even ground with Christ, or could the Creature be so with his Maker, as *David* was with *Araunah*, *Abraham* with *Ephron*, we might strain curtesie, and be coy in receiving any favour or gratuity at his Hands *gratis*, and without due consideration. But as it would shew no great good manners in a Subject to refuse his Princes Royal bounty, because undeserved, and above his possibility of requital (though it well becomes the greatness of a Princes spirit not to receive any respect from the hands of his 3. Our selves too bad. 2 Sim. 24. 24. Gen. 23. 13.

Servant,

2 Sam. 19.
32, 33.

Servant, or Subject, without large requital, as *David* to *Barzillai*;) So doth God to us, for a Cup of cold water, such is his bounty. But take thou heed of this Reply, I am not worthy, therefore can except no more at God's hands then I deserve. What Man or Angel could ever yet say, I am worthy? yet consider again, thou that art ready to reject the freely offered Grace of Christ upon this score, saying, I am not worthy; that it is more then ever Christ said to any one that came to him, *Be gone Sinner, Thou art unworthy*. The Centurion said so of himself, but Christ gives him

Mat. 8. 10. another Testimony, Verily, I have not found such Faith in all *Israel*. I read once that *Peter* said to Christ, *Depart from me,*

Luke 5. 8: *O Lord, for I am a sinful man*: But I never read that Christ said to any one, *Depart from me*, for thou art a sinful wretch, O

1 Sam. 25.
41, 42.

man. *Abigail* might in modesty say she was only fit to wash the Feet of *David's* Servants, yet did she not refuse the honour of his Bed, when the motion was made to be his Wife. And though the blessed Virgin was sensible of her lowliness and unworthiness of that singular Grace (above all shewed to any mortal Creature) she gratefully accepteth, *Behold the Hand-Maid of the Lord, be it to me according to thy word*.

Luke 1.
38.

Who

Who am I? is fit for us to say with *David*, if we respect our own desert; but when the Lord makes his Promise, we may embrace it, and desire he should make it good, saying, Though this is not the *manner of men*, yet is alwayes the manner of God. Thou art worthy is only a Note fit for the *Song of the Lamb*: *Merit* is a *Rev. 5. 9.* strange word in Heaven, never heard there of any Saints, only Christ's Merits. When the Proclamation was made, *Who is worthy* to open the Book in the Angels hand, and to unloose the Seals? there was not any stood up nor one found worthy, but the Son of God: Nor is there Man or Angel now in Heaven worthy of that Celestial Glory they there enjoy. The Angel holds his station there of *free Grace*, Men by *Mercy*; neither by *Merit*. The Angel by *Donation*, Man by *Condonation*.

4. Some again do sometimes in a sad ^{4. Sad and} manner lie down under their Burden, and ^{first mis-} say with the Prophet *Jeremy*, Chap. 10. 19. ^{giving of} *It is my burden, my hard lot, and I must bear it; and thereupon give up the Forts of Faith and Hope, and give all for lost, and themselves too, by intertaining immovable, invincible and pertinacious mis-* ^{mind.} *givings of mind*, with which they are possessed; having sad apprehensions of them-

N selves,

selves, and dreadful misapprehensions of
 God, being at the same time possibly over-
 whelmed with Distress, over-gone with
 Melancholy, over-come with Impatience,
 tyred out with a short wayting, *fiercely* and
 furiously assaulted by Satan, and deserted
 of God; and then as men swallowed up of
 sorrow, are ready to cry out, *Vicisti Satana*,
 Thou hast over-come Satan; This is thy
 hour and *power of darkness*, and there is
 no perswading them to the contrary. A
 sad and doleful case! yet in some such like
 seemed the *Psalmist* to be in that dark
 night of his desertion, when in a disconso-
 late manner he sighed out, *That his Sore*
 Psal. 77. 2. (his anguish of Spirit) *ran all night, and*
ceased not, and his Soul refused to be comforted.
 And then did he reason, as if he had no
 Faith at all, *That God had cast him off*, for-
 gotten him; yea, almost forgotten himself,
forgotten to be gracious, which is all one,
 and both alike impossible and impious to
 conceive. And then there is no speaking
 to such at all, but they will reply to all
 that seek to satisfie and perswade them,
 Esay 22. 4. *Look away from me, labour not*
to comfort me: And no other reason is to
 be expected, they will not believe, because
 they *will not*. In this temper, or distemper
 rather, was *Thomas*, who when all the
 Apostles

Apostles said, They had seen the Lord, positively Replied, I will believe none of you all, I must see a sign, and put my hands in his side, *or I will not believe*; wilful Thomas holy Bradford might well call him. In the like plight was that distressed Mrs. Honywood, Mrs. Bretergh, and Mr. Glover, of whom I spake before. We have a saying, *Dolores leves loquuntur, Ingentes stupent*, Lesser Grievs have Tongues, and vent themselves; but the great amazing Grievs convert men into stocks and stones; they have neither Eyes, nor Ears, nor Sense, nor Reason, nor any thing: But as in the first Chaos, darkness covers the face of the deep, and all darkness is hid in their secret places, as it is, *Job 20. 26.* till God speak Peace, and say, *Let there be light.* Thus it was with Israel, when stunned with Grief and Oppression, they would not receive any Message from Moses, no, nor from God; *He spake to them, but they would not hearken unto him, for anguish of Spirit, and for cruel Bondage, Exod. 6. 9.*

5. Carnal reason makes many Exceptions against Divine Precepts and Promises, *5. unlike-ly means.* from the improbability and incongruity of the means. Thus Naaman excepts against *2 Kings* washing in Jordan, for Cure of his Leprosy; *5. 10, 11* why not in Abana and Pharpar? He *12.*

1 Cor. I.
31.

expected some more extraordinary matter, the Prophets Touch or Prayers, and goes his way dissatisfied, till upon better consideration. This the most common and universal bar to the Faith of the World: Both *Jews* and *Gentiles* have stumbled at this stumbling stone; The one required a Sign, the other call for Wisdom. To both a *Christ crucified*, and Faith in a God made Man, and more humbled and abased then ever mortal was, seems an absurd and irrational Article of Faith. And to this day the *Jew* can't get this *Beam* out of his Eye, nor this *Vail* off his Face, nor the wiser World (to whom the Wisdom of God goes for foolishness) get over this stumbling-block. Now we may take notice that God all along delights to make use of contemptible means to atchieve the greatest ends; *The weak things of the World to confound the mighty, the foolish to confound the wise*: That all glory may redound to the Supreme Author, and no part of it stick to the Instrument; *Quid Philosophie & Theologie? Quid Hierosolymis & Athenis?* The Worlds Wisdom is this greatest Enemy to Divine, and the whole business of Faith; and that upon the account of the unlikeliness of the means. What makes the Papist stand up so much for Merits, and

Tertull.

and stick so fast to a Righteousness of Works, but his mean Opinion he hath of Faith? What makes so many among us have so little esteem of the Preachers, and preaching of God's Word, but the mean esteem they have for the calling of the one, and of the efficacy of the other?

6. *Present Providences* being cross to *6. Present former Presidents*, is a great Remora, and ^{Providences unlike former Presidents.} rub in the way to the Faith of many, for relying upon God in time of distress. This we may see in *Gideons* Reply to the Angel, who came and said to him, *The Lord is with thee thou mighty man of Valour*: He demurs, and replies, *If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his Miracles which our Fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us out of Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and sold us into the Hands of the Midianites*; q. d. *Israel* of old was wont to have God's presence manifested to them, by his marching before them with a victorious Hand and stretched out Arm: But now we see not our Signs, There is no more a Prophet *Moses*; how can we think other, then that God hath forsaken us? Thus would weak-sighted and short-spirited man prescribe, and tie up God to one constant method, not being able to recon-

cile God's *chastening* his people to his *owning* of them, or to *read his Love* in any other thing then outward *Prosperity*, or speedy deliverance; nor doth Distress signifie any other to them then Rejection. But as sometimes the Lord creates a *new thing* in way of Judgment, *Numb. 16. 30.* So again sometimes in way of Mercy he leads his people by *unknown Paths*, *Esay 42. 16.*

7. *Provi-
dences
cross Pro-
mises.*

7. Sometimes again *Providences* run not even with *Promises*, and then is a weak Faith much disheartned. This caused some hesitation in *Moses*, who expected *Israel* should have been forthwith delivered; God having so promised, but after his speaking to *Pharaoh*, their slavery was more increased; so that the People fell foul upon *Moses* for his undertaking, *Exod. 5. 21.* And *Moses* himself seemed to be at a stand, when he broke out into those words, *Lord why hast thou so ill intreated this People? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to speak to Pharaoh in thy Name, he hath done evil to this People, and thou hast not delivered them at all.* But this occasioned many a sad murmuring in the carnal *Israelites* all along in the Wilderness, who had promised themselves nothing but Prosperity, Ease, Plenty, and a present Possession of the pro-

*Exod. 5.
22, 23.*

promised Land : And for this their Unbelief, they fell short of the Promise, and fell in the Wilderness. God will train up his People in the exercise of Faith and Patience, before they inherit the Promises. Thus did he to *Abraham* and *Sarah*, Heb. 6. 15. *The Vision is for an appointed time, and will certainly speak, and not lye* : But it may tarry long, therefore *must we wait* (as well as believe) *for it will surely come, and not tarry*, saith the Prophet. In the mean time *the just must live by Faith* : And as he that believeth shall never be confounded, so he must *not make hast* by Impatience, and prescribing to God his time, *Esay* 28. 16. But wait and tarry the Lord's leisure, who is never slack to make good his Promise. But waiteth to be gracious, *Esay* 30. 18. And usually mans extremity is his opportunity, according to what was said of old ; *In the Mount will the Lord be seen.* Hab. 2. 3, 4. 2 Pet. 3. 9. Gen. 22. 14.

8. *It is now too late*, saith Unbelief again at other times ; I fear I have slipt the day of my Visitation, and therefore fear that Faith, Repentance, and all my endeavours come too late, and will prove as fruitless as *Esa's Tears*, and the Blessing is gone past recalling. Oh that time could be call'd back ! Oh that I were as in times past ! when the Candle of God shined in my

- Job. 29. 2,
 3. Tabernacle! Oh that I had known the day
 of my Visitation, in that my day, and the
 things of my Peace! but they are now hid
 from my Eyes. Oh that God would come
 once again, and call *Samuel, Samuel*, as he did
 when I lay down and slept; but now all
 is too late, and all is in vain. Thus said
 once the Servants of *Jairus, The Damofel*
is dead, trouble not the Master any further.
 Mark 5. 35. Thus said *Martha, If thou hadst been here,*
 when time was, my Brother had not died;
 John 11: 32, 39. now he is departed four dayes ago, and by
 this time stinketh. Oh ye of little Faith,
 why reason ye thus in your hearts, *Nullum*
Tempus occurrit Christo, Christ and his Grace
 incurs no Lapse by loss of time. Believe
Jairus, Thy Daughter is not dead, but
 sleepeth; Dead to thee, asleep to me:
 Joh. 11. 40. Believe *Martha*, and thou shalt see the glo-
 ry of God. Take heed of taking up such
 sad Conclusions, as to say, *My strength and*
hope is perished from the Lord, Lam. 3. 18.
Ezek. 37. 11. Our Bones are dried up, and
our hope is lost, and we are cut off for our
parts. I am as certainly damned, some
 have cryed out, as if I were already in Hell;
 yet despair not, it is not yet the *twelfth*
hour. All the day long the Lord stretcheth
 forth his Hand, and it is not yet the night
 of Death when none can work. Look

up to the Mercy-Seat out of this *Belly of Jonah 2: Hell*, as *Jonah* did, and thy Prayer will be heard, and thy Repentance accepted. Christ is able and ready to save to the utmost period of time, the utmost period of life, the utmost period of hope or despair, when thy hope is giving up the ghost.

Job 11.
20.

9. Blame me not, saith another, if I can't believe what is above all *reason and sense* *imaginable*, what was seldom or never known. Thus reasoned he that heard the Prophet foretel there should be so sudden a change from the greatest dearth to the

9. *It is above all humane Reason imaginable.*

greatest cheapness, such a fall of Corn in one dayes space as was never heard of, *A measure of fine Flour for a Shekell, and two measures of Barley at the same rate: How can this be*, saith he, *if God should make Windows in Heaven, yet how can this be?* Thus is impotent and short-sighted man bold to prescribe a measure to Omnipotency, and to set down what he can, and what he cannot do. This made *Luther* once to chide *Melancthon*, cast down under the difficulties the first Reformation met with: Thou thinkest *Philip*, saith he, that God must act *intra & infra*, within, or according to what *Philip* propounds: But, saith he, he will act *ultra & supra*, beyond and above all that we can ask or think. Thus it is with many

2 Kings
7. 2.

a poor

Eph. 3. 20. a poor Creature, who, as if they did study industriously to make themselves miserable, when they are pressed to fly to Christ and hope for Mercy, and the Minister tells them, *Believe and Repent*, and your Sins shall be blotted out as a Cloud; why, saith he, if the Lord should open the Windows of Heaven, all his Treasures of Grace and Mercy, yet can this be? Know, O man, *God hath opened the Windows of Heaven,*

Luk. 1. 79. when he sent his Son, that *Day-Spring from on high* to visit and redeem us, and to give Light to them that sat in Darkness, and in the shadow of Death. God opened the Windows of Heaven again, when he *set*

Zach. 13. *open that Fountain for Sin and Uncleanneſs,* and proclaimed, *Ho everyone that thirsteth,*

Eſay 55. *come to the Waters, buy Wine and Milk without Money and without Price; yea, let him that is athirst come, and take of the Water of Life freely.* There is cheaper then a Shekel for fine Flour, and half a Shekel for a measure of Barley: He gives freely, **Rev. 21. 6.** He forgives freely, **Luke 7. 42.**

Rev. 22. *He forgives freely,* **Luke 7. 42.**

10. Continued afflictions. 10. Another holds it unreasonable for him to believe that God hath Love and Mercy in store for him, he is so often under great and manifold afflictions: Deep calls to Deep, all the Waves and Billows of the Almighty are gone over him. And whence

come

come Afflictions, but from Anger; and Job 5. 17. why, but for sin? *Ans.* Then hath the Scripture told us wrong, which saith more then once, *Whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth.* Look into all the Flock of *Jacob*, if there were one not spotted, it was none of his; *Laban's* were all white Cattle. The Lord had one Son only without Sin, not one, not him without smart Sufferings. They who are now in their white Robes, were once in their blacks, and had waded through great Tribulations. *St. Chrysostome* once was invited to a Marriage, and was to go through a foul Lane, but as he was going, met a Malefactor going through the High-Street to his Execution, whence he had this pious meditation, How much better is it to go through the worse way, if to a Feast, then the fair to Execution? *Non qua, sed quo*, said he, No matter what way we go to Heaven, so we get but thither: Through many Tribulations was ever wont to be the way to Heaven, *Acts* 14. 22.

11. But I fear, saith one, I have committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost, and then what place for Faith or Hope? It is like the Sin of *Elie's* House, not to be purged by any Burnt-Offering or Sacrifice. But dost thou fear indeed? Is he more there is of that fear,

Prov. 3.

12.

Heb. 12. 8.

Gen. 30.

33.

Rev. 7. 14.

11. Fear I

have com-

mitted the

sin against

the Holy

Ghost.

fear, the less of this danger. Such as fall into that sin are *Leviathan* like, without fear, *Job* 41. 33. *Past feeling*, *Eph.* 4. 18. *Have Eyes, but see not; Ears, but hear not; Sin, but tremble not.* Know therefore, that every sin, even the *most beinow* and grievous, is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, otherwise *Manassch* had been in it; not all *sin of Ignorance*, though pursued with greatest Violence, otherwise *Paul's* had been it; nor any *sin against Knowledge* fallen into *through surprise* and infirmity (and after repented) otherwise *Peter's* had been it. But if *Paul* had had *Peter's* knowledge of Christ, or *Peter Paul's* rage against Christ, both had had a sad account to make. He that shall attentively read and compare those two places, *Heb.* 6. 4, 5. with *Heb.* 10. 26, 27, 28, 29. will understand the better what this Sin against the Holy Ghost is, and what Ingredients are in it. 1. There must be Knowledge and Illumination in the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; It is not a sin of *Ignorance*. 2. There is a *sinning wilfully*; It is not every sin of Infirmity, or relapse into a former sin. 3. There is in it a *falling away*, not every slip, or stepping aside; not every fouler sin bewailed and broken off, but an absolute falling off. 4. All these with a studied and professed

lessed opposition to Christ, and his Grace and Spirit : Thence they are said to *Crucifie Christ again, and put him to more shame*, as if he had not suffered enough before, and to *despight the Spirit of Grace*.

So that lay all these together, this cannot be thy case, oh poor mournful, distressed, doubting and complaining Christian ; who dost lament, mourn, faint, pant, hunger, thirst, fear, grieve, which they never do, who fall away as is here described, but are given once to impenitency and obduracy of spirit.

There are *four kinds of Falls*, which may befall the Child of God, each worse then other : The first and lightest is, that in our daily combate, by reason of the sin that dwells in them, they do what *they would* Rom. 7. *not, and cannot do what they would*, but daily 18. fall short ; In which respect we are none of Gal. 5. 17. us *Supralapsarians*, but *Sublapsarians* and *Relapsarians* too : This is but like the fall of a mist in Winter, the Sun breaks out, and a fair day follows.

The second is, Gal. 6. 1. When a good man is overtaken with some more notable miscarriage, as were they who dissembled in the business of Judaizing, Gal. 2. 14. They did not *ὁδοπορεύειν*, walk strait, these did Paul *καταρτίσαι*, restore. This is a fall

Ser. l. 1.
c. 7.

fall whereby a Leg is put out of joynt ; yet set again, and all is well. Let him that is free from these two, take a Ladder, as *Constantine* said to *Acesius* the *Novatian*, and go to Heaven alone ; For in many things we sin all, *Jam.* 3. 2.

The third is more sad, when a Believer falls into some *fouler sin*, as did *David* and *Peter*, into sins wasting Conscience. This like the fall of *Eutichus* from the third loft, dead for the present, but after recovered by a Miracle of Mercy.

1 King:
1. 3.

The fourth is a kind of *Apostasy*, or insensible decay, an abatement or loss of *first love*, and may be never comes to former strength and liveliness, or to regain their former peace. Thus, as *David* in his age grew cold, and needed an *Abishag* to lie in his Bosome, his natural heat being abated ; So his Sons spiritual heat abated, by reason of the *many Abishags* that lay in his bosomes ; and though he was beloved of his God, yet did his Sun set in a Cloud : This like the fall of *the hair* in old age, waxeth thinner and thinner ; though life remains, nature is not so strong and vigorous as formerly.

But there are *four worse* kinds of falls peculiar to wicked men : The *first* proves *final*, but is not total at first, but *sensim sine*

sine sensu, by little and little; Thus the *thorny ground* miscarried: This like *Elie's* 1 Sam. 4. 18. fall backward, to the breaking of his Neck.

The second, Is a *total and final*, but not *voluntary* at first, but are beaten out of heart, as the *stony ground* by tribulation arising: This like the fall of *Sisera*, he fell down Jud. 5. 17. dead, with his nail sticking in his Temples.

The third, A more fearful, a *total, final, voluntary* and *deliberate*; yet not *malitious* fall: Thus *Demas* is supposed to fall, who of a Disciple, or Teacher formerly, is said afterwards to have become a Priest in an Idol-Temple at *Thessalonica* (so *Dorotheus* Reports.) This fall is like the fall of *Haman*, when they thus begin to fall, no hopes of Recovery. Ester 6. 13.

4. Yet is there a worse; The *fourth* is as the opening of the *fourth Seal*, where appears the *pale Horse*, and *Death* upon his back, and Hell following, a *total, final, voluntary, deliberate and malitious* falling away: Such was the fall of *Simon Magus, Hymeneus, Alexander, Julian, &c.* Upon such a fall the Gulph is fixed, the Decree gone out, *Nulla retrorsum*, no renewing such to Repentance. This fall is like the fall of *Jericho's walls*, which fell down flat Josh. 6. 20. with

with a Curse annexed against Rebuilding ; or of *Judas*, who falling head long, burst asunder in the midst, and all his Bowels gushed out ; or if you will, as the fall of *Lucifer* himself, who from an Angel of Light, is become a Prince of Darknes.

This last onely is the Sin against the Holy Ghost (upon which I have therefore the longer insisted) from which they are far enough, that are oft so much affrighted ; who are more afraid then there is cause ; when their case is at most but as *Paul's*, *Peter's*, *David's*, *Solomon's*, *Manasse's* ; or at worst as the thorny-grounds, or stony, or as *Demas's* ; in all which there is a door of Hope opened upon Repentance ; and not the last, a mischievous, malicious, and despightful rejecting and treading under foot the Son of God ; upon which account many miserable Creatures have been terribly, but needlessly, terrified, as was that blessed Soul *Mr. Glover*, who upon the consideration of those words, *It is impossible, &c.* Heb. 6. 4. concluded of himself, that he had committed that unpardonable Sin, and could not get it out of his mind day nor night, and so continued along time, that he could neither sleep quietly ; nor had joy to eat, drink, or any thing ; yet was afterwards recovered. Of all the stories I have read

read or heard, I have not met with a sad-
 der then that related by *Arctius*, a foreign
 Divine, who, upon this Subject, speaks of
 "a certain rich Merchant at *Strasbourg*,
 "whose whole life had been most abomina-
 "ble for Whoredome, Drunkenness, Usu-
 "ry, Contempt of God's Word, to
 "his old age: In which at last he be-
 "gan to bethink himself, and what would
 "become of him at the last day; where-
 "upon his own Conscience and Satan to- *Arctius in*
 "gether did so terrifie him, that he fell in- *Mag. 12.*
 "to down-right despair; so that in many
 "horrid Expressions, he gave himself up to
 "Satan, acknowledging that he was;
 "he would say the Grace and Mercy of
 "God could not be so great as to pardon
 "so many and so great Sins. Hereupon he
 "was filled with horror and astonishment,
 "even gnashing his Teeth, weeping, wayl-
 "ing, and (which is horrid to relate) cal-
 "ling upon the Devil to fetch him away to
 "Hell; he would throw himself upon the
 "ground, refusing both Meat and Drink;
 "That if ever you saw the Picture and Idea
 "of a despairing person, he was one; yet
 "upon Conference with holy Divines, and
 "application of God's Promises, and ma-
 "ny Prayers made for him in Publick and
 "Private, he repented, recovered, lived
 O "piously

“ piously several years after, and idios
 “ peaceably. But enough of this, now to
 proceed.

12. *Relap-* Another saith, My case is next door to
ses into the this Sin, if it be not it; I have *replased* into
same sin. the same sin again, or others as bad, after

Lit. de
Paniten-
tia.]

Repentance and Knowledge of the Truth,
 what hope is there for me? I must say, yet
 repent, and humble thy self, thy case is sad.
 Yet shall I add what *Tertullian* saith in this
 case, *Far be it from me by saying there may be*
hope after a second or third fall to encourage
any to a sinning anew. Yet did *Sampson* fall
 a second time into the same, and *Jonah* in-
 to another as bad as his former: *Peter* lap-
 sed and relapsed a second and third time,
 yet repented, and received to favour as
 great as ever. God calleth upon *Back-*
sliders to return, and promiseth Mercy;
 Promiseth to *heal Back sliders and back-*
sliding. He biddeth us forgive a Brother
 that offendeth seven times a day, if he ask
 forgiveness, *Luke 17. 4.* And his Mercies
 are sure above our mercies. Yet saith *Ter-*
tullian again, God forbid that any should
 make this use of this Doctrine, that because
 God is so ready to forgive, man should be the
 more bold to sin; shall abundance of Divine
 Mercy provoke to more Impudence and Impie-
 ty? shall man make himself the worse, because
 God

Jer. 3. 12,
 14.

God is so good? Sin often, because he pardons often? But yet saith he, Let no man be over-whelmed with despair, if he have fallen again. Let him fear to offend again, not forbear to repent again. &c. Let none, saith he, refuse to be restored to health again, if his Disease have returned again; if the Disease be returned, the Medicine must be renewed.

To conclude, The last Plea against believing is, I fear I am in God's black Bill: *I fear I*
may be a
 And if our Sins be upon us, and we pine away *Reprobate.*
 in them; how should we then live? Say those Cavillers Ezek 33. 10. So say some, If I should be reprobated, how can I believe I shall be saved? would you have me believe a lye, or am I not bound to believe I shall be damned? *Ans.* No man is bound to believe he is a Reprobate, but every man bound to give all diligence to make his Calling and Election sure.

2. I say as formerly, no man can know himself to be a Reprobate; though Election may be known in this life, Reprobation cannot so easily; for though our present Faith and Obedience argue Election, yet present Infidelity and Disobedience conclude not Reprobation; for then it would follow that none such should after repent and believe, which we daily see the contrary.

3. I do not say, Every one is bound to believe *he shall be saved*, but every one is bound to believe *that he may be saved*.

4. Every one is bound to believe *he shall perish*, if he do not believe and repent, and that not by reason of any secret Decree, but because he goes against the expresse conditions of Salvation, Mark 16. 16. *He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned*. Therefore busie not thy Head to enquire into God's Decree; but study thy Duty according to his expresse Command and revealed Will.

5. There is an expresse Command of God, That *all men every where should repent*, Acts 17. 30. All sorts of Men, all sorts of Sinners; and there is an absolute and universal Promise of forgiveness upon Repentance, Luke 24. 47. There is an absolute Command also, that we should believe in Christ, 1 John 3. 23. So that we offend God as much in not believing, as in any not obeying.

6. Know there is a sufficient remedy provided for thee, whatsoever thy case may be, Heb. 7. 25.

7. Thou wilt not reason thus in other matters, as to say, If I am doomed to be famisht, why should I eat or drink? God's Decree will stand. When God shall destroy

stroy the course of Nature, put an end to Seed-time and Harvest, and shut thee up in Prison within Stone-walls, and deny thee daily Bread; then fear thou mayst be famisht: So if God should take away his Gospel, his Ministers, Ordinances, and his Spirit, and call in all those Precepts and Promises he hath made in his Gospel (which he will never do) then thou mayst conclude thy case desperate. Were it Decreed I should be drowned (which yet I can never know) should I therefore cast my self into the Sea? or if thrown in, refuse to swim to save my life? or rather labour to keep my self out of the Water? None but ignorant and desperate Wretches make such simple and desperate Inferences from God's Decrees.

8. Use then thy Endeavours, and leave all to God: Do as *Joab* did, when he saw the Battell behind and before; *Let us play* ^{2 Sam. 10.} *the men; saith he, and the Lord do with us* ^{11.} *what is good in his Eyes; If I perish, I* ^{Ester 4.} *perish: But if I perish, I will not perish* ^{16.} like a Coward or Sluggard, Heaven shall hear of me; I will perish repenting, believing, praying, so as never any man did yet. Thou hast at least as good ground to encourage thee to pray and hope as *Nineveh* had, who when under such Comminations

Jonah 3.
8, 9.

and Threats of destruction at hand, said, *Who knows but if we repent, cry to God mightily and return thoroughly, the Lord will repent, and have mercy on us, that we perish not?*

CHAP. IX.

The Causes and Reasons of Excuses.

THUS have I wearied the Reader, and my self too, in seeking to hunt out this subtle Soul-Deceiver out of his Subterfuges and Lurkin-holes. If we could catch those Foxes that marr our Vines, and bind this Destroyer of our Country (as they call'd *Sampson*) it were time well spent. We will sit down now, and see if we can discover the Reasons of those so many and various Excuses: Them we shall reduce to two heads, 1. Enquiring the *Causes, whence* they come. 2. The *Ends, why* they are taken up.

*Causes of
Excuses.*

1. For the first, If we enquire *whence* they come, it will lead us back as far as *Original Sin*; there, then, thence they had their Original: They came in with the first Sin. As Satan was a Destroyer and Murderer

Murderer from the beginning, and abode
 not in the Truth; so was this Sin a De-^{1. Man's}
 ceiver and Lye from the beginning; when ^{Fall, Cau-}
 Integrity went out, Excuses came in: ^{sa prima,}
 An old Date, and memorable Year. Pri-
 mo mundi, The first year of the Conquest:
Anno libertatis deperditæ, The first year of
 man's slavery under Satan; And as with
 a Conqueror many new Usages are
 brought in, so is it here. God made man
 upright, there was none of these in his
 prime Constitution; but man fallen, sought ^{Ecel. 7.}
 out many Inventions. This was *Causa prima*, ^{ult.}
 The first Cause: There and then did this
Black Art commence, which ever since the
 Children of men have studied and improv-
 ed. The ancientest Art or Science in the
 World, and most practised; Young and
 Old, Learned and Unlearned, all versed in
 it; no need of these in Integrity. ^{Joh. 3. 20,}
He that doth good cometh to the light, but he that ^{21.}
 doth evil flyeth it, lest his deeds should be
 made manifest. Then did Adam and Eve
 lay their heads together, to cover their
 Bodies with Fig-leaves, and their Sin with
 Excuses. The harmless Fowls of the Air
 build their Nests on the tops of Trees, in
 the sight of the Sun; but the *Beasts of Prey*
 have their Dens, Caves and Holes, wherein
 they

they hide themselves, and steal not out, but in the dark.

2. *A Prima
orta, Our Cor-
ruption by
the Fall.*

Jam. 1. 13.

Gen. 6. 5.

2. The second is, near akin; *A prima orta*. Original Corruption (*Peccatum Originatum*) flowing thence, hath filled the World with Excuses ever since. Now is man led aside of himself and enticed, now is every Imagination of the Heart evil from his youth. And man busieth himself about these two Imaginations chiefly, 1. How to devise and contrive Evil. 2. How to conceal and cover it. As the Fox and Badger first *earth* themselves under ground, then do what they can to stop up the mouths of their Dens, that they may not be discovered. Thus doth man busie his Brains night and day how to defend Sin, and to prove Darkness to be Light.

3. *Causa
assistentes.*

1. *Princi-
pal, Satan.*

3. Nor could the World be so full of Excuses as it is, if there were not some *assisting Causes* to set them forward; Of which there be two sorts. The one *Principal*, viz. Satan, and he, to be sure, is never far off to lend his assistance. And hence you may see with wonder how prompt and ready some are at this Art, as if they had been trained up in *Loyola's School*, that you may know whose Children and Scholars they are, by their Language and Evasions ;

ons: He that is the Father of the *Lye*, is the Father of the *Excuse-maker*: He that taught man to lye, taught him to make an Excuse; He that taught Eve to entice, and Adam to sin, taught both to make excuses. The Devil first put into Judas heart to betray his Master, then taught him to wipe his mouth, and say, *Is it I?* He first taught Ananias to tempt the Holy Ghost, then puts a lye in his mouth to excuse it. Know therefore Man, or Child, when thou tellest a lye to make an excuse, the Devils stands at thy Elbow: Speak the truth, and shame the Devil.

Acts 5.

2. The second and *less principal*, is Man, Father, Master, or what ever other: It is not possible else that many so young should be so dexterous, and ready at this Art, if they had not been taught. Parents sometimes put a lye into the Childs mouth, and bid him say, He is not at home. Thus the High Priests instructed the Souldiers to say, Christ was stollen out of his Sepulchre while they slept; and they would take it upon them. Profound Casuists (the Jesuits Predecessors) who have since so improved this Art to such a perfection, that they must be acknowledged the only Masters of it; who can find a cover for every Dish, and an excuse for every Sin.

2. Seconda-

7.

Mat. 28.

13

See the my-
stery of
Jesuitism.

4. There

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4. There

4. Deficient
Causes.

1. Not con-
sidering
God's Om-
niscience.

4. There be other Causes Concomitant, which I may call *Cause deficientes*, Deficient, or defective Causes, 1. Want of due sense and consideration of God's Omniscience, Omnipresence, Purity, and his other Perfections, of searching the Heart, weighing the Spirit, that he is a strict Observer of all our Actions; a severe Discoverer, Detester and Detester of all Deceit; and that will bring to light all the hidden works of Darknes; otherwise they would stop and say, *Will not God find this out?* They consider not, saith the Lord, *that I remember all their wayes, how their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.* They forget how he tetcht out *Adam* out of his Thicket, and singled out *Achan* from the Croud. *Jacob* knew his Fathers sight was bad; and the Wife of *Jeroboam*, that *Abijah's* Eyes were set; or he would not have been so bold to deceive his Father; or she to disguise her self, to amuse the Prophet. Had *Gebazi* known his Masters spirit had gone along with him, and that he should have been so immediately examined, and taken tripping in his Tale, he would have let *Naaman* and his two Bags alone. If the Prophet knew what the King of *Syria* did in his Bed-Chamber; The Lord that revealed that to him, knows all thou dost in

Hof. 7. 2.

1 Kings
14. 4.

in the Chambers of thy Imagery: He compasseth thy Bed and thy Path, knoweth thy down-lying and up-rising, and is thoroughly acquainted with all thy ways. Psal. 139.

2. A second deficient Cause is Men consider not the *latitude, extent, purity and spiritualness* of God's Law, That it requireth truth and sincerity in the Worship, Service and Obedience, which we do perform to to God. *The word of God is quick and powerful, — piercing to the dividing of the Soul and Spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the Heart:* Now did men believe, and were sensible of the quick and lively Power, the Majesty and Authority of the Word, and did remember those Rules to walk with God and be upright; In all our wayes to acknowledge him; That whatsoever we do, we should do it as to the Lord, and not to Men: and withall consider That by this word we shall be judged in the last day; It is not possible they should study such shifts, and flatter themselves in them; for there would be no more need of them, then for the man that doth well to hide his head, and fly from the light, when he can make out his works to be wrought in God. 2. Or the extent of the Law. Heb. 4.12. Col. 3.13. Joh. 12. 48. Joh. 3.21.

3. *On the
day of
Judgment.*
Mal. 3. 17.

Rev. 20.
12.

Esay 29.
15, 16.

4. *Want
of Consci-
ence.*

3. Very few have heard the sound of the last Trumpet sounding in their Ears; nor do they believe there is a Book of Remembrance written before God. And that a dreadful day of account is coming, when these Books shall be brought forth, and that then God will set all in order before the Sons of men, with all the circumstances of their evil Actions; and then bring every Secret to light, and reward all according to their Works: For did they so, it is not possible there would be so much base dealing and wickedness in the World, making Lyes their Refuge; as if they had made an Agreement with Hell, and a Covenant with Death. But there is a world of Atheism in *Christendom*, and of Infidels among Christians, that seek to dig deep to hide their Counsel from the Lord; and their Works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? They turn things up-side-down, saith the Prophet, turn a fair side outward, and a foul side inward.

4. In the fourth place, There is little of that we call *Conscience* in the World; and the want of it is a main deficient, or efficient I may say of Excuses. There is much talk of Conscience every where, but where is it to be found almost? Right Con-

Conscience is *Cordis scientia*, saith Bernard; *Or cum Deo scientia*, say others; not *Scientia simpliciter Intelligentiæ*. as I may say, a bare speculation, but an active, practical and uniform Concurrence of Breast and Brain, of Profession with Practise; yea, of Man with God: when words & deeds agree with the heart, and the heart with God. But alas, there is much of Science in the World, little of Conscience; much Head-knowledge, little Heart-knowledge; much studying men, little minding of God. Were there more of this in the World, there would neither be carrying on of Designs, nor studying Excuses; but a serious and sincere endeavour to be without offence both before God and before men. Acts 24. 16.

2. For the ends which Excuses are made use of, 1. Many fly to them, as we say, *For shame of the World*, and Speech of the People; as did they who took up stones to throw at Christ, who pleaded, They did it not for any of the good works he had done (that had been too bad) but for Blasphemy: Better a bad excuse then none at all. People would have cryed Shame on them, if they had not covered their Malice with some plausible pretence. So again, when Pilate urged his Accusers for Reason, Reason, as they cryed out to him for Justice, Justice; why? what Evil hath 2. Ends of Excuses.
1. To avoid shame.
John 10. 33.

John 19.
6, 7.

Mat. 23.
36.

hath he done? I find no fault in him: They would have been thought inexorable, if they could not have said, *We have a Law*, and by our Law he ought to die: But none could they name that he had ever violated. So when the Scribes and Pharisees never left persecuting Christ, *John Baptist*, and the Apostles, and all that were better then themselves, People would have cryed shame on them for their Impiety: But when they could say, You see we Reverence the true Prophets, *Moses, Samuel, Jeremy, Daniel, &c.* We Celebrate their Memorials, garnish their Sepulchres, and for those good men we lament their loss; *Had we been in our Fathers dayes*, we would have *Sainted* not Slain them: But Jesus and the Baptist we know not whence they are: The one hath a Devil, the other is a Wine-Bibber, a Samaritan, Heretick, a Mover of Sedition, and what not? So that now they must not be thought any wayes ill affected to true Piety, but honoured as the Pillars of the Church; the zealous Asserters of Truth, Unity and Order: and the only Suppressors of Heresie, Schism, Faction, Sedition and Novelty. Just so do the Papists St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Lawrence, &c. we keep dayes in their Memory, preserve their Reliques, pray to them, honour them with
a kind

kind of Worship, shew more Piety to-
wards them then all you Protestants do.
But if *Luther, Calvin, Cranmer, Ridley, &c.*
teach the very same Doctrine that *Peter and*
Paul, they shall be Anathematized, or burnt
to Ashes, if they can light of them.

2. A second end, Is to gain a *repute of*
Religion: And such is the lustre and beauty
of Religion, that though few affect the
power of it, yet all court the Name, and
are ambitious of the Reputation of it.
Thus *Machiavel* instructs his Prince to put
on the Vizard of one Religious; yet to scruple
nothing mean while, whereby he may
more enlarge his Dominion, or drive on
his Designs. Thus those very *Jews* again
make their defence, We stone thee not for
any Cures, or other good Works wrought,
or thy shews of Sanctimony; but thy
Blasphemy and Arrogance; To make thy
self the Son of God, and equal to God;
we cannot bear: Very pious Souls!
Though many have been so wicked as to
do it, none ever was so weak as to own it,
that they hated Piety and Virtue for its
own sake: A fair Pretence is fittest to co-
ver so foul a Disposition. Those that ha-
ted, and cast out their Brethren of old, as
the Prophet said, for owning the Name of
God (no other Crime) yet said, Let God
be

2. To gain
a Repute of
Religion.

John 10:
33.

be magnified, *Essay 65. 5.* All was done out of zeal to God's Glory, and the Churches Peace. What do the Papists and other Persecutors pretend less?

3. To stop
the mouth
of Conscience.

3. A third end, Is to stop the mouth of Conscience, and still its Clamors: Conscience would lead the man an unquiet life, and would be clamorous, if he had not somewhat to pretend. Therefore some grave shews of Religion, some form of Godliness, some Sins forborn, some good Works done, some Duties performed must bribe Conscience to let them alone. Thus could the Pharisee devour a poor Widows house; yet keeping on his constant course of Prayer and Divine-Service, the noise of the Widows cry never troubled him. So they that crucified the Lord of Glory, when they had such a pretence as had a face of Law, *Habemus Legem*, were not at all scrupulous and so squeamish as *Pilate*, who called for water to cleanse himself of that Blood; they never call for water to wash their hands, but take his Blood, and all *Pilate's* guilt upon themselves; *His Blood be on us and our Children* they cry, without the least remorse. Only they must have it done before the Passover, and must not go into *Pilate's* house that day of Preparation, that they might not be defiled when they came

Mat. 23.
14.

Mat. 27.
24, 25.

came next day to the holy Passover; which Jo. 16. 28. they conscientiously were preparing themselves for.

4. This is a profitable way *to save charges*, 4. *To spare* cost, pains and trouble, about Religion and *pains*, their own Souls. And what a wonder is it to see those very men, who will spare for no cost, pains or charge for their Bodies, Diet, Apparel, Phyfick, Recreations, or their Buildings and Furniture; yea, their Horses, Dogs, Hawks, every thing; stick only to be at cost and pains about their Souls! The easiest and cheapest Religion is alway best: The shortest way to Heaven pleaseth most. Now these Excuses fit their turn for that, and nothing like them. For should they be at charge to mind Religion (as some do) it would ask pains, study, care, diligence, fear, trembling; there must be reading, praying, meditating, reforming, repenting, and I know not what more. To what end all this wast, saith the Sluggard. I have heard of a more compendious way, and I will venture upon it: A good excuse will save all this labour. And he is a very poor man indeed that is to seek an Excuse.

These deal with their Souls, as many *Thread-bare Gentlemen* do with their Backs and Garments, who must be in the fashion,

P

and

and loth to be at charge of new inside and outside; buy some handsome fashionable outside, put a little Trimming on it, and care not what the inside is; who can look into that? or as others, who get a long Vest, or Cloak, to cover all; whereas to have all new and good, would ask more cost.

*Subtula
per a trita
subest Ta-
nica. Hor.*

CHAP. X.

The sinfulness, vanity and frivolousness of Excuses.

The sinfulness of Excuses.

HAVING given an account of the Causes and Reasons of Excuses in general, (not intending to speak of each particularly :) I come now to give an account why in our Proposition at first I called them sinful and frivolous.

1. I shall speak to their sinfulness.

2. To their frivolousness.

Their sinfulness appears in three things.

1. *The great hinderers of good:*

1. They are *Maxima impeditiva bonorum*; The greatest hinderances of any one thing in the World, of all good. 1. They keep men from the good of Duty, Faith and Obedience, which they are call'd to. 2. From the duty

duty of *Repentance*, which they might have upon failour of the former. 3. Then from the *comfort* they might have had from Faith, Obedience and Repentance, had it not been for them. 4. They keep from God that Subjection, Honour and Obedience which we owe to him. All which is to be seen in those Guests in that Parable, *Luke 14. 18.* when invited to come to the Gospel-Supper, to partake of Christ and his benefits, they shew little Faith to believe the report of so much Grace and Mercy tendered; little Obedience to come in upon a Gospel invitation, presuming those were just Excuses they alledged of the Farm, Oxen, and Marriage. 2. Having those Excuses in readines, they never trouble their minds with Repentance, as if they had been at all to blame. 3. Then are they frustrated of all that good and benefit which should have accrued to them upon acceptance: They rejected the Counsel of God against themselves, as was said of some, *Luke 7. 30.* They were in a fair possibility of well-doing, had they not barred up the way to Salvation by these excuses. 4. The Lord seeing his Grace so slighted, upon such sleeveless and frivolous pretences, is justly incensed, sendeth to call in others, resolving (whosoever should)

these should not participate of his Grace and Mercy.

2. *The great Seminary of Evils.*

2. They are secondly, The *maxima productiva malorum*, The greatest Nursery and Seminary of Evils: A world of evil springs from them. They may be called *Progenies Viperarum*, A Generation of Vipers; or *Semen Maleficentissimum*, as *Junius*; or *Malignantium*, as *Ar. Montanus* renders that of *Esay* 1.4. *A Seed of evil Doers*, a pestilent Seed of a very lewd Race. Of these Excuses that may be said, which *Solomon* chargeth the Whore with-
all, She increaseth Transgressors among men,
and maketh them ten times worse then they would be: Or what was charged on *Jereboam*, an active Ring-leader unto general Sin, who lay under much guilt; *He sin'd, and made Israel to Sin:* Yea, which is worse then both, that may be charged upon Excuses, which the Lord chargeth upon the false Prophets, That they *strengthened the Hands of evil Doers, that none doth return from his wicked way, by promising them life.* Encouraged and animated with these, they have made a Covenant with Death, and Agreement with Hell; not as if in a regardless and desperate manner they slighted them, but as being in their own conceit and apprehension sufficiently secu-
 red

Prov. 23.
28.

Jer. 23.
14, 17.

Esay 28.
15.

red against them. So *Junius* gives the See Jun. in locum.

3. Whatever men may pretend, these 3. They are all one with flat denial. Excuses are upon the matter none other then *plain refusals*, and flat denials; but in a more smooth and complemental garb. They speak as if the men were wondrous well affected, onely sorry they could not magnifie their religious Inclinations; by reason of these diversions: But the truth is, they had no real intention at all; *Verbalis excusatio realis recusatio*, An excuse in words is a refusal in deeds. And the Lord interprets it for no other, therefore sends to call in others more cordially willing: These have rejected me, and I will reject them. Hence our word *παραισῶμαι*, *Luke 14. 18.* rendred excuse; is often rendred to refuse, renounce, reject, deny, as *Acts 23. 11. 1 Tim. 4. 7. & 5. 11. Tit. 3. 10. Heb. 11. 25.* So that they might as well have spoken out in plain English, as *Corah* did, Numb. 16. 14. We will not come up; for they never meant it, though they made such a fair pretence for a blandation and colour.

2. Their *frivolousness* appears, in that they are not able to stand; 1. Before the 2. Their frivolousness. presence of God. 2. The tryal of his Word.

3. The strict examen of Conscience. 4. A fiery tryal of Affliction. 5. Least of all the

day of *Judgment*. Those must be more solid things (not Wood, Hay or Stubble,) that can stand before these; such are precious Faith, true Repentance, sincere Obedience, a pure Conscience, and undisssembled Holiness, and the whole new Creature.

1. *They can't stand before Gods presence.*

1. They cannot stand before the *presence of God*, in any solemn approach before him; for what Communion hath Light with Darkness? A solemn drawing near to God in any religious Duty will dispel these frivolous Excuses, as the approaching Sun doth Fogs and Mists, and sends the Beasts into their Dens. If the Majesty of a King (then much more of a God) sitting upon his Throne, doth scatter the Wicked from before him: What man that hath any reverence of a Deity dare come before him with his Idols in his heart, to enquire of him, least God should answer him according to his Idols? Who is there that allows himself in any known sin, can come before God and say, *Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my Reins and my Heart?* see it there be *any way of Wickedness in me*. Who is there that hath any acquaintance with God and Prayer, and knows that God is a jealous God, of pure Eyes, and will be sanctified in those that draw near to him; that dare
say

Prov. 20.
8.

Ezek. 14.
2, 3.

Psal. 26. 2.
Psal. 139.
23.

say to God as the Heathen to his Goddess?

Da mihi fallere, da justum, sanctumq; videri.

Or as he to *Elisha*, Herein the Lord be merciful to me, when I go into the house of *Rimmon*, &c. This were to mock, not worship him. These Excuses must off, as *Moses* his Vail, when we go to have any thing to do with God.

2. They are not able to stand before the Word of God, applyed close to the Soul; as we see in *Felix*, who started and trembled, and had soon enough of the Sermon. True it is, a man may slightly and cursorily run over the whole Bible, and daily have a glance at this Glass, and not minding himself, turn away, and go on in a sinful course. But if he continue to look wishly into it, as *St. James* saith, as if he would look it through: As *Elisha* so looked upon *Hazael*, it would dash sin out of countenance, as that look did him. So mightily and powerful is the word of God, that it pierceth the thoughts and intents of the heart: And these paltry Excuses are no more able to stand before it, then *Dagon* before the Ark.

3. Frivolous again, because not able to abide the strict examen of Conscience, when it calls *ad scrutinium secundo, & tertio*; When it takes them to task, as *Elisha* did

2. Nor before the word. Acts 24. 25.

3. Nor the strict enquiry of Conscience.

his Servant, It finds them faulting and fumbling. Few men are either *Scripture-proof*, or *Conscience-proof*, willing to put themselves upon the Tryal and Verdict of *God and Conscience*. *Conscience* is as *Eliab* to *Ahab*; *God's word*, as *Micaiah*; tho one an Enemy, the other speaks no good to them, but alwayes evil.

1 Kings
22. 8.

4. Nor a
day of
distress.

4. Nor able to abide a day of tryal, when God lays his hand upon the outward man by Affliction; or the inward man, by impressions of his Displeasure, writing bitter things against them: The *Paint* falls off when it comes near the *Fire*: Or as we say of *Witches*, all their skill fails them, when under an Arrest of Authority. (Such is the impression of Divine Majesty upon his own Institution, that Satan falls as Lightning before it.) So when these Excuse-makers, the Masters of this Black-Art are under God's Arrest, all their Art, fails them, and their heart too. But the godly man is not afraid to converse with God, with his Word and Conscience; therefore no more dreads Affliction, then the good Husbands Family dreads the winter Snow, being clothed with double and treble Garments. God himself, his Word and Conscience, speak good to him, therefore Affliction also and every thing else must do the same.

Prov. 31.
21.

5. Lastly,

5. Lastly, Least of all are they able to stand before God's Judgment Seat; for if they cannot stand before God in any solemn manner of approach, nor before his Word, when he speaketh on Earth, and his Voice shaketh the Conscience of the guilty Sinner, nor before Conscience, God's Sub-Officer, nor a day of Sicknes; how shall they be able to stand before the Son of man, when he shall come in flaming fire, with his mighty Angels, to render Vengeance to all that obey not his Gospel? How shall they be able to endure when he speaketh from Heaven, whose Voice shall shake Heaven and Earth. I may therefore reason with thee in the Prophets words, *If thou hast run with Foot-men, and they have wearied thee; how wilt thou contend with Horse-men?* Or as *Rabshakeb* said to the dismayed *Jews*, *If you be not able to stand before any of these single, how will ye be able to withstand the whole Power of his wrath.*

5. Not before Gods Judgment-Seat.

2 Thess. 1. 8.

Heb. 12. 26.

Jer. 12. 5.

CHAP. XL

The Application of the whole.

*The Appli-
cation.*

HAVING gone thus far in the *Explicatory* part of the nature and several kinds of Excuses; what remains, but to make some useful *Application* of the whole, and so come to an end. And what use can we so fitly begin with as a sad Lamentation?

Here may we then well sit down as *Israel* of old did by the waters of *Babylon*, and burst out into tears, when they remembered *Sion* (and now reflected upon their present Condition.) Much more cause have we, if we remember *Paradise* and *Primitive Integrity*, when the Image of God was upon man, and his *Tabernacle* with man: Man being like the Moon at full, full of transcendent light; God as the Sun directly beholding him, and man as the Moon in her fulness reflecting the glory of his received light to his Creator again. Man once a Companion of Angels, and a Compendium, as it were, of a Deity in a little Volume; for we are his *Off-spring*. But now he is degenerated, and into what an *Abyss* of sin and slavery is he plunged! we stand amazed as at a sad Prodigy, when we behold

*Acts 17.
28.*

behold those two Luminaries, the Sun and Moon in an Eclipse. But man is the greatest *Prodigy* in the World, in whom the two great Lights of *Judgment and Conscience* have suffered so great an Eclipse, so that the light which was in us is now darkness; the natural man conceiveth not the things of God; and in stead of that propenseness to good, and rectitude in our mind, now all his imaginations are evil. We may not only say, O *Lucifer* how art thou the greater Light fallen? But O man, the second great Luminary, how art thou fallen too? Well might the ancient *Israelite* weep who had seen the former Temple in its glory, to see so mean a one now like to succeed in the room of it. Well might *Israel* bewail the change in *Rehoboam's* dayes, from what it was in *Solomon's*, when Wisdom and Justice sate in the Throne, and now folly was set in high degree; weakness and wilfulness ruled and misruled, and lost all. The golden age and sheilds of *Solomon* turned into brazen. Well might *Job* bemoane his condition, so much altered; he had sate chief among Princes, and was now all alone upon a Dunghill, a Companion of Owls; and Worms and Vermin his Associates. Well might *Nebuchadnezzar* have lamented, could a Beast

1 Cor. 2.

14.

Gen. 6. 5.

Ezra 3.

12.

2 Chron.

12. 10.

Job 30.

29. & 17

14.

speak,

speak, who had commanded the Empire
 of the World, now driven from the Throne,
 and grazing among Bruits: I may take
 up the words of the *Lamentation*, and say,
What shall I take to witness for thee? what
 Lam. 3: *shall I liken to thee? Thy breach is great like*
 13. *the Sea, who can heal thee?* Where is man's
 Wisdom now! have they no understand-
 ing, *Psal. 14. 4.* to call Light Darkness,
 and Darkness Light; and what is become
 of his Conscience now, that when he is
 called from Sin to Duty, Repentance, Faith,
 Obedience, he flies from all, by and to Ex-
 cuses?

Mat. 18. 7. *Woe to the World because of Offences,* was
 once said: And woe to the World because
 of *Excuses*. They are the sin of the World,
 of the Church, of all, of every one. When
 we are called off from sin, we make Excu-
 ses; when to confess sin, Excuses; when
 to Duty, we put off with Excuses; when to
 Believe, we make Excuses; when the high-
 est Grace is tendred, we make all void by
 Excuses. Nothing but Excuses, Excuses,
 none so young, so ignorant, but is skilled
 in them; none so poor, but is stored with
 them; none so good, but one time or
 other hath had one; none so bad but hath
 many of them.

I have

I have named an hundred in this Discourse, and another may come after and find an hundred more, and yet leave gleanings to them that come after us both: few good Excuses. but store of bad from self, others, God, Satan, any thing, every thing. Let us take a short Survey.

1. When we are called to *avoid sin*, or *break it off*; how do we shrug and shrink? When the Lord cries out to *Lot*, *Hast thou, escape for thy life; linger not*; how do we cry loath to depart, as the Sluggard out of his Bed. When the Lord calls as *Jonathan* 1 Sam. 20. to his Lad, *make speed, hast, stay not; Cito*, 38. *longe, tarde*, as we say of the Pestilence, we invert it, and say, *Tarde, prope, cito*; we should fly from Sin speedily, fly far off from it, return slowly or never. We remove slowly, loath to part with it, as *Jacob* with *Benjamin*: Cry out for it, as *Micah* Judg. 18. for his gods; go along as far as we can, or 14. dare, as *Phaltiel* did to *Michal* his wife (from whom he was to be divorced) and 2 Sam. 3. can't part without tears; and in stead of 15. *going far*, we do as *Hagar*, sit down within a *bow shoot*, loath to see sin die, and return to it again as soon; what means this bleating else? Oh not so my Lord; Is it not a little one, a venial sin? If I never do worse, I hope I may do well enough; I have

Have tasted but a little of this Honey, and must I die for it? Have not others done as bad, or worse, and yet done well? I have Examples, multitude, great ones, some that go for good men, my Leaders; I hope my place, calling, quality, profession, common custom may excuse me; beside, I live civilly and peaceably, and do what the Law will bear me out in.

2. Again, when men are dealt with to *confess and acknowledge* their sin, what ado is here, how long was *Samuel* ere he could get *Saul* speak that hard and unpleasing word *Peccavi*? how many shifts and evasions first? I have done my duty as far as I thought my self bound, I am not in fault at all; we sometimes deny the fact as *Gebazi*, sometimes extenuate it. It was my ignorance, saith one; It is my nature, another; an ill custom I have got, a third, I was not my self: A fourth, I was in drink, in passion, in haste, anger, or in fear: Or but in jest, say others, my zeal, good meaning: Conscience must excuse me, say others, I had passed my word, made a Vow, bound my self under an Oath and Curse, and what would you have me do? my Credit and Honour lay at stake, my Shame was prevented, Profit advanced, my Calling followed, such benefit to my self

self or friend procured : Besides, the matter was not so great, and was but once, nor had I any ill intention in the earth ; I should have been singular, and I know not what, if I had done otherwise, and made scruple. I am civil, painful, peaceable, pay every one his own ; and if I never do worse, I make no question.

3. If we can't but yield it to be a sin, then have we other Excuses, *Let others look to it*, I am faultless ; it was their doings, not mine ; I was a Child, and must do what my Father bad me ; a Servant, and must keep my Masters Secrets, and do his Commands ; I had my dependance on my Superiors, and must comply with their will ; I had Commands to encourage me, Promises to allure, Threats to terrifie me, Examples to draw me, Friends and Companions to importune me, how could I refuse ? Besides, what some scrupulous persons, more precise then wise, make such a matter of, is the custom of the Time, Place, Country and Company that I converse with. God help if so few as some men say should be saved, and the way to Heaven should be so narrow.

4. When we are pressed to *repent of Sin*, and forsake it, how do we still Conscience, and justify our selves. Are we not all
Sin-

Sinners ? have not the best their infirmities ? There is no perfection in this life ; sometimes, we cast it upon Satan, he dogged me ; sometimes upon God, he denied me the Grace, gave me not his Spirit, or ought me a shame.

5. When called upon to more *seriousness* and amendment of life, we are ready to plead God's great Mercy, gracious Promises, Christ's Merits, the Doctrines of free Grace, justification by Faith, remission of Sins, imputed Righteousness, and our purposes of Repentance hereafter.

6. When excited to *holiness*, we plead the disrepute Holiness is in, the inconveniences we may meet with, the Aspersions cast upon the Godly, the Afflictions and Tryals they meet with, the difficulties in the way of Salvation, the scandalous Lives of some Preachers, the foul Miscarriages of some Professors ; and one great Observation above all the rest, the quiet and peaceable end that some great Sinners have made.

7. When we are warned to take heed of *security* and slothfulness, some are ready to plead God's unchangeable Decrees ; they who are elected shall be saved, endeavours are to no purpose ; all our Works cannot merit : If not elected, it is in vain to strive

strive against the stream, Faith, Repentance, and Obedience will come to nothing; God giveth Grace and Salvation where he pleaseth, and none else can have it. These are the Excuses about Sin.

2. In the next place, when we are call'd upon to *duty*, instead of saying, *Speak Lord,* ^{1 Sam 3.} *thy Servant heareth,* as Samuel; or *Lord,* ^{10.} *what wilt thou have me to do?* with *Paul.* ^{Acts 9. 6.} How many put-offs? I have put off my ^{Cant. 5. 3.} Coat, how shall I put it on? I have much indisposition at present. It is unreasonable, mid-night, come again some other time, trouble me not now, *Luke 11. 7.* Or if we yield at any time, it is with no good will, as the unjust Judge (not out of fear of God, or regard to man) relieved the Widow, only to be rid of her; so do some perform Duty, not out of love to God, or Duty, but to be rid of the clamours and importunity of Conscience, and to be more at ease and quiet. Good God! what a world of Excuses have the Sons of men devised to shift off thy holy Commands! Some have confessed the Duty is good, the Command just; but I must be excused, I am a Child, I have no competency of parts, my insufficiency may excuse me. Others cry out, What a weariness it is! what strictness, difficulty, unpleasantness is in the way

to Heaven ! my Ignorance, want of breeding, unaccustomedness to such courses may

Hag. 1. 2. excuse me ; others again, I am for it, like well the work, but the time is not yet fit for it, I will acquaint my Friends, and fairly

Lu. 9. 61. bid them farewell, and take my leave of them, or to be sure will after my Fathers decease, when my Estate is come into my own hand. I have now a busie Calling saith another, a full Employment, little spare-time for Soul matters : But I fully purpose when my Children are grown up, and provided for, at least when I am old or sick ; and I trust all will be well : others again in such cases will plead ; It is not my Calling ; the rich may, the Minister must, I may be dispensed with ; lastly, some will say I fear all is too late, I despair of acceptance and success.

3. When we are invited to *believe* and exercise Faith, how is it we have so many Excuses ; the Promise is too good, I too bad, altogether unworthy, not holy, not humbled enough, the means unlikely, Providences are dark, Promises delayed, the Vision doth not speak ; it is not with us now as with former Presidents, God withdraws, Satan insults, my Heart misgives me, my Flesh and my Heart, my Faith and Hope fail me ; my Sins are too great, my Repentance

too little, for so many, heinous, reiterated Sins, against Knowledge, Conscience, Vows, Promises, Corrections, Deliverances, Experiences, &c. how should I believe?

Thus we see there is nothing but Excuses, Excuses at every turn, Excuses for Sin, for Duty, for Faith, for every thing. And if we enquire into the cause, doth not this plainly discover the face of the Soul to be wofully smutched, our native Beauty deformed? God made man upright, but he hath sought out many Inventions, *ratiocinia* *Latin* renders it, Reasonings, (strange Reasonings) *Computationes*, *Ar. Montan.* Reckonings (strange Reckonings,) doth not this plainly shew our Nature is tainted; Bloud corrupted, Inwards infected? doth not this demonstrate that we are acted, instructed and beguiled by the Serpent? that we have strayed from God, and are estranged towards him; that we are unsensible of his Purity, forgetful of his Presence, unacquainted with the work of the Spirit, and the Inside of his holy Law? Besides, that we are little versed in Conscience-work and self-examination, and that we are extream forgetful of the Day of Judgement.

Again consider, are not the Ends as base and sordid? To avoid the worlds

shame, to gain the repute of some Religiousness, to stop Conscience in the mouth and muzzle it, and to procure some little ease to the Flesh, by saving the labour of through conversion and sin-mortification.

Again, what is the fruit of all, is not that as bad as bad can be? to hinder all intended good, frustrate Gods gracious Tenders and Promises as much as in us is, to obstruct the way to Heaven, and to make the strait Gate yet straiter; to gratifie Satan, to make our selves utterly incapable of mercy: what doth more confirm and harden in Sin; what doth discover more gross hypocrisie than these Excuses, which in word seem to express a good inclination and willingness, when indeed they are flat Denials.

Yet once again consider; will these bring thee into Gods presence with any chearfulness; when thou art to draw nigh to him? will these cause thee to lift up thy face with joy and confidence to God? will they not make thy Spirit to falter; thy Faith to flag, thy Hands to hang down? Can these stand before the light of Gods Word duly perused, or endure a through search of an awakned Conscience? when affliction comes, will not these increase thy trouble, adding inward to outward?

outward? and when Death comes, will not these put another sting into it, and put more poyson into that Cup? And where wilt thou appear at the day of Judgement with these thy Excuses, but be confounded as he that stood speechless, having nothing to say for thy self. Mat. 22.
12.

And consider lastly, if it be not through these that millions of Souls do daily miscarry and are shut out of Heaven, having by them shut themselves out of Grace before. Now lay all these together, and tell me seriously if here be not just matter of Lamentation. Sit thee down therefore good Christian, and before thou passest from this, consider if this be not, or hath not been thy case, and that these many Excuses have not left thee without Excuse at the last.

2. From this use of General Lamentation we may proceed to *Particular Humiliation*; and may not each of us take up the words of the faulty and forgetful Butler, and say, *I call to mind my Sin this day*, and say this concerneth me, I have been wont to excuse my faults, sometimes by flat Denyal; sometimes laying the blame on my Ignorance, forgetfulness, my Nature, Custome, Passion, &c. And when called to Duty, have we not made 2 use of
Humiliation.
Gen. 41.9.

such slight put offs as are mentioned before, or worse may; be such as *Corah*, we will not come; *We will not have this Man Rule over us*; *our Tongues are our own we will speak*; *As for the Word of the Lord we will not do it*, but do as our *Fathers, Kings, &c.* have done before us, shall *Moses* or the Minister put out our Eyes, it is not the Lord, nor shall we see Sword or Famine, Hell or Damnation; it is some peevish *Baruch* that instigates the Prophet, shall this man (the Minister) that came to sojourn amongst us become a Lord over us; and the like: now I may say, if *Cain* shall be punished sevenfold, surely *Lamech* seventy fold, if they that know not the Masters Will are punished, how many stripes shall he have that knew and did not? if these in the Text who made such plausible Excuses were shut out, what shall become of them who made light of it, fell upon the Messengers and slew them? many there be, if they will speak out, have made worse, less tolerable Excuses, some accusing Satan, some God; his Decrees have made them careless; his Severity desperate; his Mercy presumptuous; the Blood of Christ more filthy; his Grace wanton; his Patience impenitent, yea, hast thou not said in thy heart, who is the Lord, I know

Num. 16.

14.

Lu. 19. 14.

Psal. 12. 4.

know him not, what will the Lord do for us, what profit shall we get, if we walk humbly before him? Let us to *Egypt*, let who will go to *Canaan* that hard Land, that eateth up, maintaineth not the Inhabitants, give us Flesh-pots, take you the Manna, give us the Pleasures, take you the Recompence of Reward; we see no such Excellency in Christ, Beauty in Holiness, Preciousness in the Promises, Glory in Heaven, as to make us willing to die to Sin and the world and our selves, and give up our selves to this strange life of Austerity, strictness, watching, praying, Repenting, and renouncing the world: If those fair Excuses were condemned, what shall become of them that make foul repulses and persist in their Rebellions, yet the one or the other is the case of most. But that you may not think so slightly of Excuses, we shall tell you a little more of their sinfulness. They are the grand Sin of the world, the great Apollyon, the oldest mother of Iniquity, the closest Sin, that doth so easily beset us, a Big-bellied Monster, hath in it all manner of sins; rip it up and you will find it guilty of every Breach of the Law, and every miscarriage against the Gospel.

First it stands guilty of the Breach of

the whole Law, both of the first and second Table, and particularly of severall Command. e. g.

The first Command which requires that inward, natural, holy worship and honour which is due to God is broken. 1. By omission, the Knowledge, Love, Joy, Delight in God, obedience to him, calling upon, praising and serving him is neglected upon presence of the Marchandize, Farm, Oxen, &c.

2. By commission, this fills the world with false Gods, sets up others in his stead, which are preferred, esteemed, trusted in, sought after more than God: Hence some charged to have loved their Belly, Pleasures, Profit, Children, Mammon more than God: The Papists honour their *He and she Gods*, saith one of their own, and worship them no otherwise then God himself. They pray to the Virgin *Mary* as to God, and prefer her sometimes to Christ himself, they call her *Mother of Grace*, *Mother of Mercy*, pray to her to deliver them from Satan, save them from Hell; yea, some have been so shameless as to say, God hath divided his Kingdom between himself and her, reserving Justice to himself, and settling Mercy upon her; so that it is lawful to appeal from the Sons Justice to her Mercy; and that the Soules Plaister is com-
pounded

*Jud. Vi-
ber.*

pounded of the Mothers Milk and the Sons
 Blood; no greater Blasphemy or Impiety
 can be uttered, yet have they their Argu-
 ments, their Authority, their priviledged
 and allowed Books of Offices to excuse
 them. These things are notoriously
 known, I do therefore spare Quotations.
 So had *Saul* somewhat to Excuse his lea- ^{1 Sam. 28.}
 ving God to go to the *Witch*, viz. Because ^{15.}
 God would not honour him with an
 Answer at his Desire; *Abaz* had some-
 what to plead for his renouncing God,
 and setting up the Gods of *Edom*, because ^{2 Ch. 28.}
 he was smitten by the *Edomites*. ^{23.}

2. As for the *second* Commandment,
 concerning Instituted Worship, a world
 of Excuses have been found out to eva-
 cuate it, till they at *Rome* have turned it
 out of the Decalogue, and set an *Et Ce-
 tera* only in the room of it. *Jeroboam*
 had an Excuse for his neglect of the Insti-
 tuted Worship in the Temple, and setting
 up his Calves, it was to ease the People
 of much unnecessary Labour. The Pa- ^{1 K. 12. 28}
 pists think the spiritual and simple Wor-
 ship prescribed in the Gospel to be low,
 mean, untaking, therefore set up Image
 Worship to stir up Devotion, call their
 Images good Lay-mens Books, affirm the
 Image may be worshiped with the same
 worship

worship with the Prototype, as the Crucifix with *Latreis* (the same worship which is given to the Deity) so it be with these Excuses and Crotchets of distinctions, *improperly, redactively, &c.*

3. For the *third* comes in the Swearer with his Excuses, may I not swear so long as it is to the Truth? again, so long as I do not swear by the Name of God, but by the Mass, this Light, my Hand, Faith, or Troth, &c. But this is forbidden by the Prophet, *Jer. 5. 7.* By our Saviour, *Mat. 5. 35, 36.* By the Apostle, *Jam. 5. 12.* Or again, if I did not swear by the Name of God I may be excused, I should not otherwise have been believed, or I was urged to it, or was in passion, &c.

4. Excuses are the great *Sabbath breakers*. If I rest, though I sanctifie not that Day to the solemn service of God (publick and private) may I not be excused? I plow not, market not, if I go to the Church, though I do nothing at home besides before or after; If I hear a Sermon once a day, what need I go again the second time? If I keep it my self, though my Servants or Children travel, sleep, play, what is that to me? These forget the Commandment runs, *Thou, thy Son, thy Daughter, &c.*

5. If

5. If we come to the second Table, we shall find Excuses as faulty there, as injurious to men, as guilty of impiety against God: These fill Church, State, Families with confusion and disorder. The Mother of Sedition, Rebellion and Disobedience in the State, of Schism, contempt of all good Order and Ministry in the Church.

Sometimes in *Defect*. If Magistrates be bad, they think they may be contemned, if weak, resisted; If Parents old, poor, indigent, they think they may be neglected; so taught the Corbanists *Mar. 7. 11.* If Ministers be not Eminent, or live as you would have them, slight them, and slight the Service and Offerings of the Lord, as they did upon the account of *Eli's* Sons. If Magistrates be remiss and weak, cast off their Yoke, as did *Jeroboam*, who conspired to depose his Lord and Sovereign.

1 Sam. 24.
17.
1 Chron.
13. 7.

Sometimes again in *Excess*, what Superiours command, we must obey; as they lead, we may follow; what they prescribe, we must follow: They shall answer for us, &c.

If I have to do with my *Equal*, then I am as good a man as he, I'll carry no Coals. If with my *Inferior*, I may tread on

on him, make him know I am his Betters, my Servant shall know I am his Master, my Wife that I am Head, &c.

6. This is a great *Murderer*, and guilty of much Blood. If I am affronted saith the Gallant, I will draw, or send a Challenge: If challenged, I will not so *Un-man* and *Un-Gentleman* my self, as not to fight him. To lose the repute of a Christian (one that feareth God and the guilt of Blood) is no disparagement; but to lose the reputation of a Gentleman (or indeed a *Lamech*) that were a perpetual disgrace. If any wrong me, should I not hate him, if he provoke me, strike him, and lay him at my foot? If abuse me, may I not revenge my self, and do to him as he hath done to me; never be reconciled to him again? as I hate to be false to my Friend, but shall love him as much as he loves me, so I will not be false to my self, but hate an Enemy as much as he hateth me.

7. This is the great Adulterer, and *Mother of Whoredoms*. If I commit Adultery, *David*; if Incest, *Lot* may Excuse me. If I have committed Fornication, it is a Venial Sin; many of the Fools of *Israel* have done so before me, I am not the first, nor shall be the last; if I talk at random,

dom, and speak scurrilously, it is but to make my self and others merry, and words are but wind; if I have a wanton Eye, or lustful Thoughts, Thoughts are free, what hath any to do with them?

8. The Eighth Commandment is wholly taken away by Excuses. If I steal, better so then starve. If I be false to my Master said the unjust Steward, Luke 16. Blame me not if I desire to live, I have nothing to live upon but my Wits, better so than dig, or beg, or be cashiered. If I rack my Tenants, may I not make the best of my own? If I over-reach in Bargaining *Caveat Emptor*, may I not sell my Commodity as dear as I can? If I spend all, it is but my own; if I hoard up all, lend, spend, give nothing, may I not please my self? If I have an advantage against my Neighbour, and take it, vexing him with troublesome Suits in Law; the Law, not I am to be blamed. If I commit Sacrilege, the Church hath enough, and too much already. It is but a piece of a Babylonish Garment, given to the Church in times of blind Superstition. If I pay not my Tythes, the Parson comes easily enough by his Living. Thus is there no Eighth Commandment.

9. For the Ninth, we may say Excuses were

were a *Liar* from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, and yet pleads for all manner of untruths. If I tell an untruth, the *Jesting Lye* doth no man harm, the *Officious Lye* doth a deal of good to my Friend. The *Excusatory Lye* hideth a fault and saveth anger, yea the pernicious defaming *Lye* will have somewhat to defend it self. I have now cryed *Quit* with him, he reviled me and I have reviled him; if slander, it was my Enemy. If I take up an ill Report and spread it, you have it as I had it; I was not the Author of it; yea, if I make Oath to a false Charge, it is but what is put in my mouth, and others will second it. Thus is there no Ninth Commandement left neither.

Lastly, as for *Covering*, what Excuses have men ready to justify any thing? If my Neighbour hath Field, or Tenement that lyeth convenient for me, why may I not seek to add House to House, and Field to Field? by fair means if it may be, as *Abab* to *Naboth*, or else out him by Law and dispossess him if that will not do, as did *Jezabel* by a Wile and Quirk in the Law; or play the Sycophant, and forge some cavilling Accusation, to pick a hole in his Coat, as sometimes *Zachear* had done;

done; or by flattering Insinuations undermine him as Ziba did *Mephibosheth*, or if I envy, repine at, or malign my Neighbours good, what hath any to do with that? Thus have Excuses made void the whole Law, and not left one unviolated.

2. As Excuses are such capital offenders against the Law, they are as much against the Gospel too, endangering the frustrating of Gods Counsel, slighting the offers and tenders of Grace, as those in the Parable, *Luke 14. 18.* Thereby receiving the Grace of God in vain, or turning it into wantonness, or slipping the season and opportunity of the day of Grace; as if he that out of Grace stretcheth out his hand all the day long, were bound to stretch it out all their life long to a rebellious and gainsaying people.

2. Are as injurious to Christ, slighting his Person and Kingly power, because his Visage so marred, Outside so mean, Parentage so low, Followers so inconsiderable, his Precepts so pure, Yoke so strict, Cross so heavy and ignominious, that he goes for a blessed man that was or is not offended in him. They cast him out of the Vineyard, and had a reason for it, then the Inheritance was their own. They take away his Life, and have a Law and great Reason

Mat. 11. 6.

Mat. 21

38.

Reason of State for it, to prevent the Roman subjugation. Excuses have banished the Gospel, because it brings a Religion and Laws, different from former Customs, *Acts 16. 21.* have made the Jews to stumble at the imputed Righteousness of Christ, *Ro. 10. 23.* having a Legal Righteousness of their own, have emboldened the Papists to joyn other Mediators with Christ, as the Blessed Virgin, and their Patron Saints, to mingle the Bloud of Christ with that of Martyrs, their own Merits, Pardons, Pennances, Satisfaction; all to Corroborate (but indeed to Invalidate) the alone all-sufficient Satisfaction of Christ. Excuses have corrupted the Doctrine of Grace laid down, *Tit. 2. 11, 12.* Perverted the use of Grace, *Rom. 5. 22.* that Grace should reign by Righteousness; have made Christ the Patron and Minister of Sin, *Gal. 2. 17.* because he came to save Sinners; in a word, have subverted the whole Gospel, perverting the Doctrines of Justification, Faith, Repentance, Remission of Sins, to encourage men to sin, and presume with the greater security.

3. Excuses have sinned against the Holy Ghost, slighting and putting by his Motions, Excitations, Convictions, as did Felix, not regarding his present; first, second

cond reiterated Knocks, Calls, Invitations, but perswading themselves the Spirit will come again at their pleasure, when they are old, sick, or dying; as *Samson* once thought, he would go shake and rouse up himself as in former times, but wist not that the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him.

Jdg. 16.
30.

3. Excuses are of so evil and malignant aspect, that they have turned all things unto Sin, that they have had to do with, increasing to more ungodliness, making ill-use of Gods Decrees, *Ezek. 33. 10.* Of Gods Providences, as *Adam*, the Woman whom thou gavest me. Gods Patience, *Eccles. 11. 8.* His Silence, *Psal. 50. 21.* His Mercifulnes, *Deut. 29. 19.* Riches of Goodness, *Rom. 2. 5.* His Grace, *Rom. 6. 1.* His Preservations, *Jer. 7. 10.* We are delivered to do all these abominations. His Denials, or displeasure, *1 Sam. 28. 15.* The Lord doth not answer me, I hold my self disoblighd from seeking farther after him. The Lord doth not remove this Plague, I am therefore disoblighd from further waiting on him, *2 Kings 6. 31.* May we not therefore, seeing it is of such a poysonous nature, that it sucks poyson out of every thing, say that it is *κατ' ὑπερβολὴν ἀμετρώως*, Out of measure sinful? And I

R

may

Jerem: 37
4 1x8

3. Uses for
Infama-
tion.

Ex. 7. 2.

may add one thing more, Nothing doth
more harden men in sin, keeping them
from Repentance, keeping them that have
once fallen from arising, and causing them
that once turn back, to slide back by perpe-
tual back-slidings, to hold fast Deceit, and
refuse to return, no man once saying,
what have I done? but spurring on by
these Excuses, rushing into Sin, as the
Horse into the Battel,

2. Some Uses of Information.
1. This may inform us, what a *slifing*
Creature Man is, full of Shifts and Ex-
cuses, you know not, Protest like, where
to have, and how to hold him; It is so
hard a matter to fasten a Conviction upon
him, harder to take him off from his false
bottoms, so many Mazes, Mules and Me-
anders, windings and turnings, that it
is hard driving them out of them all. See
it in Pharaoh, when God first sent to let
Israel go, his answer was, *I know not that*
it is the Lord, then requires a Miracle to
prove it, *Exod. 7. 9.* Aaron throws down
his Rod, it becomes a Serpent, then is he
half perswaded; But when he saw the
Magicians do the like, he is off again, *v.*
13. So was he coming and going again,
about the Waters turned into Bloud, *v. 22.*
But when the Frogs were in his Chamber,
and

and croaking in his Bed, you would have thought you had him fast. *Intreat the Lord to take away the Frogs, and ye shall go, Exod. 8.8.* The Frogs are no sooner gone, but he is gone too. When the Plague of Flyes came, then *Israel* should go again, *Verse 25.* When they were gone, *Israel* must not stir, *Verse 32.* Thus he dealt fast and loose with God: Sometimes you hear him relenting, after repenting of his Repentance; sometimes praying, anon saying his Prayers backwards. One while he sends for *Moses*, and intreats his Prayers, and seems stricken, *Exod. 9. 27.* At another time, sends for him in all haste, and prayes, and promisseth fair, and asks God and them forgiveness, *Exod. 10. 16. 17.* Yet, though this great Fool was ten times in the Mortar of Affliction, his Folly departed not from him. At first, he would not yield at all, *Exod. 5. 3.* After a little, *Chap. 8. 28.* they should go, but not so far, *Chap. 10. 11.* They might go now as far as they would, so their Wives, Children, and Cattle staid. At last when he could no longer will nor chule, then go serve the Lord as ye have said, and take all with you, Herds and Families, and b'less me also, *Exod. 12. 32.* How many shifts had *Saul*, ere he would come to say, I have sinned,

Prov. 30.
19.

Prov. 11.
30.

finned, 1 Sam. 15. The world is more full of shifts, than any thing else. So that to those three things which posed the wise Man, that he said he could not find them out; The way of a Ship in the Sea, of an Eagle in the Ayr, of a Serpent on a Rock: We may add a fourth, hardest of all to be found out; *The way of a Man with his Excuses.* From hence it is, that the work of Conversion is so difficult; hence that the work of the Minister is never at an end. This made the wise Man say, *He that winneth Souls is wise*; is the man of a thousand; and hath learned the Art of Arts. Man is so fly and subtle a Creature, and so full of shifts and put-offs; that as it is an endless Task, to reason Children out of their Will, when they are ill of *Worms*, perswade them to take any thing to do them good, they had as lieve dye almost as take it, shew him the *Aloes*, oh it is bitter; now his *Worms* gnaw not, he is well now; or give him any thing else; then if ill again, he will, but not yet, to morrow, or anon, but not yet; then, not so much! half that quantity! then he looks many a sad look upon it, and takes a little, when he sees there is no remedy, and when he hath it down, is ready to cast it up again. So is it with many men,

as to their Souls, to take any thing that may do them good, to purge out Sin by Repentance, how many Put-offs? How many Pleas? How many Delays? How many four Faces? which shews, they had as lieve dye almost, as repent and live: Or, they will only take a litle (as one saith) upon a Knives point, or at the point of Death. Bp. Andrews.

2. This gives us an account why there is so little true Grace, and so few real Converts in the world, so little Repentance, Faith, Obedience and Sincerity; the Reason is, there are so many Excuses. As he said once, *To will is present*, to perform is another thing, out of my power, so may most say, *To Excuse is present*, but to perform is out of my Endeavour and Desire, they never go about it. Hence the misery of man is great upon him. And Issachar-like, for Laziness and present Ease, he chooseth rather to lye under the two heaviest burthens of Sin and Wrath, then to be eased of both by using a strenuous endeavour in right use of Means. An Excuse costs little, but any course of Piety asketh Cost. E. g. Repentance requireth Confession, Contrition, Humiliation, Mortification, Reformation. Prayer calleth for Watchfulness, Sobriety, Faith, Reverence, Fervency, Frequency,

Holiness, Obedience, Charity, uprightness of Conversation. Obedience, that again calls for the Heart, Spirit, Faith, Fear, Love, Diligence, Care, Conscience, Patience, Constancy, Proficiency, Perseverance. As for Faith, that is to be grounded on the Promises, and maintained by studying them, eying Precepts, Conditions, Threats, frequent Prayers, and by a constant course of obedience and sincerity of Heart: Sincerity likewise calls for much Inspection of our Hearts, Examination of our Wayes, and State, much eying of God, searching the Scriptures, observing our selves, avoiding of sins and occasions of Sin, performing Duties, close and strict walking with God, and according to his word. Now all these require cost and pains, which the lazic person thinks may be well spared by this commodious and easie way of Excuses.

3. See the folly and falshood of that common Proverb, *A bad Excuse is better than none at all*: We may invert it and say, Better no Excuse, than the best of them all, which make men double guilty, by adding sin to sin, and sinful Evasions and Excuses to sinful Actions; the godly sincere man is the happiest man in the world, that in this sense he is ἀπαλογίσιος, without Excuse, as needing none, the only

only Excuseless person in the world, and the more excused, because he hath the fewer Excuses.

4. What a sad difference is there between *Gods Care* of mans salvation, and *Mans Care*, or rather *Carelessness*? What could God do more, he provideth a Feast, inviteth the Guests, sends out his Servants once and again, *Come, all is ready*, Mercy is ready to save you; what could Man do less to save himself, or more to undo himself, slighting all by frivolous Excuses? The Shepherd doth all he can to preserve his Flock, and the silly Sheep love to stray and wander, and so become a Prey to the devouring Wolf. The tender Mother would keep the Child in her Lap, and that seeks to get loose, and meets with a knock. The Mother puts on fair Cloaths to keep her Child clean, and the first thing the Child doth, is to paddle in the Dirt, and make a Beast of it self. The Father provides his Son a Portion and sets him up, that he may live like a Man, and he by improvidence makes all away, and becomes a Beggar. Here is much Care on the one hand, and woful Carelessness on the other; yet neither Shepherd, Father or Mother, are blamed in the former Cases; but here all is cast upon God, as if we would

father and fasten our perdition upon him.

5. This shews us what a vast *difference* there is upon this account, between the Sincere and the Hypocrite, in 3 respects.

1. The *sincere* doth all he can to fortifie himself by serious Arguments and Excuses against Sin, and for Duty. How can I do

Gen. 39 9. this great wickedness and sin against God? The other doth all he can, beats his Brains, studies Arguments, baffles his Conscience, frames Excuses to fortifie himself against Duty, and to encourage himself unto sin.

2. What a difference is there between the one *Excusing*, applauding and admiring his state, and the other *questioning*, suspecting and disliking his state, judging and abhorring himself. The proud Pharisee cryes up his own Righteousness, and his many good Deeds: The poor Publican cryes out of his Sins, and begs for Mercy. Holy *Jab* abhors himself in Dust and Ashes, and wicked *Saul* extolls himself to the Sky, I have done all that the Lord commanded me. The holy Apostles suspect themselves, and in an holy Jealousie say, Is it I? and impudent *Judas* full of desperate Malice, dips in the Dish, and looks his Master in the face, and saith, what, is it I? Humble *Smyrna* bewails her Poverty and Defects, when the Lord said she was Rich, Rev. 2. 9.

And

1 Sam. 15.
13.

vapouring *Lodices* vaunts of her Riches, when the Lord saith she was wretched, and miserable poor.

3. As to confessing, and concealing Sin: The one doth freely and voluntarily confess it, the other useth all his skil to deny or conceal it. *Judab* unasked, unforced, said, *What shall I say: God hath found out our Sins*, Gen. 44: 16. when indeed there was pure Innocence; *Gebazi* questioned and examined, denyes the Fact, *Thy Servant hath been no where*. 2 Kings. 5. 25. What a difference was there between *David's* Repentance, and sense of Sin, and *Saul's* unsensibleness. The one cries out; I have done foolishly, it is I, what have these Sheep done? The other said, It is not I that sinned, but these Sheep, the People that went with me. 2 Sam. 24. 17. 1 Sam. 19. 21.

6. This shews us what a difference there is between *Man's Judgement* of himself, and *Gods Judgment*. Let but Man be his own Judge, he hath so many fair Excuses, none would be guilty; but when God enters into Judgment with him, there is none will be found innocent.

7. What a difference is there between a man's judgement of Sin at present while Conscience is benumbed, they make a mock of Sin, make light of Reproofs and Threats, and please themselves in their Excuses,

Excuses, as *Cain* and *Judas*; and when Conscience is awakened and affrighted, how have they then thrown away all their Excuses, turning all into self-accusation, self-condemnation, utter desperation, and sometimes *self-destruction*? Desperate *Cain* cries out, Now I see what Sin is, and apprehend mine so great, as it cannot be forgiven. And cursed *Judas* cries out, *I have sinned*, I have sinned, the Blood of the Son of God rings in my Ears, and cries for Vengeance; and I, whither shall I cause my Shame, my Sin and Guilt, and Horror to go?

8. This may inform us again (and think seriously of it,) what a *difference* there is in *God's Carriage* now to man, and man's to God, to what it will be in *that day*. First, God here calls men graciously, *beseecheth them to be Reconciled*, offers Grace, Mercy and Forgiveness freely; but then the Sinner will find the Case altered, Man will be the *Petitioner* then, and beseech God to be reconciled, and beg for Mercy and Forgiveness in vain; for then is the time of *retribution*, and God will deal with Man, as he had dealt with him before. There is now Intreating on God's part, and Slighting on Man's. But oh! what intreating will there be then on Man's part, and slighting

slighting on God's! wretched Man slights
 God's Grace, Promises, Precepts, Threats
 here, and God will slight man's Cry, Tears,
 Prayers, Repentance, and Torments there.
 God must have thee Excused when thou
 goest on in thy Sin, and thou must have
 God Excused when thou goest on to thy
 punishment. There Excuses will be met
 withal in their kind, and match'd with
 Excuses. When God calls, thou sayest *Ex-
 cuse me*, if I shew no Obedience, and when
 thou callest, God will say, *Excuse me*, if I
 shew thee no Compassion. Thou couldest
 formerly be full of Sin, yet full of Hope,
 and I am now full of wrath to thee, yet a
 God full of mercy: You once said, Who
 is the Lord, that I should serve him? and
 now saith the Lord, who are ye, that I
 should save you? you then said to me, I
 know thee not, now I answer you in your
 own Language, *I know you not*: It was
 once your answer to me, *Depart from us*, it
 is now my final answer to you, *Depart* for
 ever from me, ye despisers of my mercy;
 you once mocked at my Threats, and
 laught at my Commands, and I will also
mock at your Misery, and laugh at your
Calamity.

*Qui salvo
 metu &
 salva fide
 peccant,
 salva Ve-
 nia in Ge-
 nennam de-
 trudentur.*
 Tertul.

2. There will be old pleading then, to
 little purpose; thou wilt then be ashamed
 of

of these pleas, it was my Nature, Custom I had got, it was in my Drink, Passion, or the like,

3. It will be in vain to say, Lord, Lord, I was a Christian, professor of Religion, a constant Church-man, I have heard thee preach in the Synagogues, teaching in our Streets, or Houses, I have eat and drank in thy presence, and at thy Table, done many good works, and spoke many good words.

4. It will be to as little purpose to say, Lord, I trusted in thy mercy, to the promise of the Gospel, to the Bloud of thy Son, when the Lord shall reply, My mercy was declared to them *that fear me*; my Gospel for them that deny ungodliness, and live *soberly, righteously, and godly*, my Son's Bloud was shed to *cleanse*, and take away Sin. I am amazed, and tremble to think what amazement and horror will then seize on all workers of Iniquity, when they see themselves thus disappointed of all their Lying hopes, and it calls to my mind the sad plight that that cursed *Haman* was in, when he saw the *King, Queen, Mordecai, Harbonah*, all against him. The Kings favour he so relyed upon, that he never questioned a change, he could but ask and have. The *Queen* had invited him, and
none

Luk. 1. 50.
Tit. 2. 12.
1 Jo. 1. 7.

none but him to a Banquet, *Harbonab* was one of those that bowed to him, *Mordecai* was the only man he meant to Ruine; but now on a sudden the Scene is changed, his Plots fail, his Sin is discovered, *Mordecai* is advanced, the Queen that Feasted him is his Accuser, and it was in vain to fall down and beg Mercy, the King, whose favour he had abused, pronounceth Sentence, and he is immediately hurried to Execution, and made a Spectacle to all the Court, and a dreadful Example of God's just Judgement to all ages. *Harbonab*, and all Officers about the Court, not once opening their mouth in his behalf, but all ready to aggravate his Crimes, and to further his destruction. Little did he ever think, he should have seen such a day. The like or worse, will be thy case, presuming Sinner, who now rely'st on the mercy of God, the blood of Christ, the promises of the Gospel, and the many Favours God hath bestowed on thee, all which thou hast made ill use of: Thou wilt find to thy sorrow, God, Christ, the Gospel, all the former favours and mercies of God, rise up against thee to condemn thee, and none to speak a good word for thee (Angels or Men) but to aggravate thy Offences, and then will it be

be too late to fall down and supplicate. They shall have Judgment without Mercy, that have despised and abused Mercy.

5. Consider what will be in that day, when God shall summon all the World together, both good and bad, face to face; what sending and proving, what accusing and excusing will there then be? The Friend will not spare to accuse his Friend, to save himself; the Child the Father; the Husband the Wife; the Adulterer and Adulterers, will each impeach other; the people cry out of their silent, or seducing Ministers, and all say, It is long of you, that I am in this place of Torments, *my Blood be upon your Head*: Had it not been for your Perswasion, Counsel, Encouragement, Example, I had never been so bad then, or so miserable now. They will those that were thy Companions in Sin, leave thee in the Lurch, as the Priests did *Judas*, to shift for thy self, *See thou to that*. There will wicked *Ahab*, who sold himself to work wickedness, see himself stript naked of all his old Excuses, and cry out, and condemn himself (unhappy, accursed *Ahab*) and justify *Elias*, *Micaiah*, *Naboth*, saying, Oh, that I had never wronged, hated, or persecuted you! *Cursed Covetousness!* that set me on to desire my
poor

poor Neighbourhood spot of Ground! *Curfed* *Jefabel*! that didst contrive the procuring it! *Curfed* *Witnesses*, who out of baseness of Spirit, would make Oath against an Innocent! *Curfed* *Judges*, and Ministers of State, to comply with such illegal Commands! *Curfed* *false Prophets*, to send me to *Ramoth Gilead*! *Curfed* *Satan*, who put that delusive answer into their mouths! And *curfed* *my self* most of all, who sold my self to work wickedness! It is I, unhappy I, that must now pay for all.

9. This may inform us further, that fair words, good Language, and civil Carriage, may be shut out of Heaven, as well as Prophaneness, Persecution, and slighting of Mercy. Those in the Parable had specious Pretences, delivered themselves in fair Language, I pray thee have me Excused, and I pray thee have me excused, said the two first, neither of them said, I will not, I care not: one said, I cannot, but none, I will not, yet all shut out. Trust not then to good words, and a plausible Carriage.

10. This may inform us again, that Heaven may be lost by an undue, eager, and immoderate pursuit of things Lawful, following our Callings, Trade and Business: the Oxen, Farm, and Wedlock, are to be regarded,

regarded, but in a lower and subordinate measure; never to juggle out the one thing necessary. The great *Husband*, and good *Huswife*, may be as far from Heaven, as the Spendthrift, and ill Huswife. *One Calling* minded, makes not the Christian, without the other. Rest not then, in thy diligence and painfulness, in thy outward Calling.

11. Lastly, this informs us, that *Relative Duties* alone, make not a Compleat Christian, if Religious Relations be neglected, as they oft are. *I have married a Wife, and therefore I cannot come.* Cannot the Wife be observed and respected, but God must be unserved, and neglected? It is small commendation, to be the most loving Husband, and the best Wife in the world, if not also the best Christian. To be the most provident, and indulgent Father, the most dutiful Child; if regardless of God. What a Solecism and Incongruity is that, the Man to have great respect to his Wife, little to God; the Wife careful to please the Husband, careless of pleasing Christ; a Child dutiful to Father, disobedient to God; a Subject loyal to his Prince, disloyal to his God, and a Rebel; true to thy Countrey, and false to thy God? This is to be faithful in the little,
and

and unfaithful in the much and main. There are *Relations* wherein all stand in to God, have an equal regard to these *Relative Duties*, relating to God, as to them to men, and thou art the right Christian.

4. An Use of Examination.

4 An Use
of Examination.

We shall now proceed to an Use of *Examination*, and only make three Enquiries.

1. Art thou one that do'st abandon all frivolous Excuses, and givest up thy self to the call, and will of God, as the Disciples, when call'd to follow Christ, left all immediately, and followed him? Do'st thou say, with *Samuel*, *Speak Lord, thy Servant heareth*; with *Esay*, *here I am, send me*; with *Job*, *What I know not, teach thou me, and if I have done Iniquity, I will do so no more*. This is the Character of a gracious Heart, the Language of a *willing people*. This Obedience is above Sacrifice, and readiness to hearken, above the fat of Lambs. But if thou studiest delays, and put-offs, *Let me first bury my Father, Bid my Friends farewell, try my Oxen, settle my Land, &c.* Take heed thou be not set down Tardy, Delinquent, and Recusant. Good people are the only *Excuseless persons*, wicked all Excuses.

Mat. 4.22.
1. Sam. 3.
Job 34.32.

2. Dost thou *furnish*, and fortifie thy self with good Excuses, to keep thee sted-

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fast,

- fast, and unmovable in good, and resolute
 Gen. 14. 22. against Evil, such as *Abrahams*, I have lift-
 ed up my hands to the most high God, therefore
 will not take a Thred, or Shde-lutcher, or
 any the greatest matter to be made rich by
 any thing indirectly gotten. Or *Jephthahs*,
 Jud. 11. 35. I have opened my mouth to God in a solemn
 Vow, and I must not go back. Let it be Son
 or Daughter, or an only Sin, it must go.
 Or hast thou *Joseph's* Excuse in-readiness?
 Gen. 39. 9. How can I do this wickedness, and sin against
 God? Or *Tamar's*, when tempted to like
 2 Sam. 13. 13. filthiness, I, whither shall I cause my
 shame to go? Do not intreat, do not force
 me. Or the *Rebabiters*? when urged to
 drink, who answered, we may not, we have
 Jer. 35. 6. a Charge from our Father to the contrary.
 These are good Excuses, and fortifying
 Considerations, such as the people of God
 use to preserve themselves by, these will
 hold water, and endure the day of Tryal.

Again, dost thou make our Saviour's
 Excuse, when assaulted with all kind of
 Mat. 3. 15. Temptations, to Satan, *Scriptum est*, It is
 written, and I must keep me to the Rules
 Mat. 4. of Scripture; to *John*, when he refused
 out of modesty, *It becomes us to fulfil all*
 righteousness; again, to his Mother, when
 Luk. 2. 49. checked by her, *Wist ye not, that I must*
be about my Fathers business? these are for
 our

Imitation. Or art thou ready to make *Peters Excuse, God is to be obeyed before men, Act. 4. 19.* Or canst thou make *St. Pauls Excuse,* and say for thy self, I delight in the Law of God in my Inner man, I consent to the Law that it is good, if there be any evil that I do, it is what I would not, it is what I hate, if any good not done, or not so well done, it is the good I would do, and would do better, *Rom. 7. 15. 16.* Or lastly, to make all sure, dost thou fly to Christ for Sanctuary, seeking no other Advocate, or Excuse-maker, but cleavest to him, desirest to be found in him in thy Integrity, Faith and Conformity to him. That thou canst say with the Apostle, *We 1 Jo. 5. 19: are of God, though the whole world lieth in wickedness.* The world hath a world of Excuses, and miscarry in them, we have but one Excuse and Plea, and that we are sure will hold, and that is, that we are of God, and that we are in Christ Jesus his Son, *this is the true God, and Eternal Life, 1 Jo. 5. 20.* Here saith the Believer, is my Rock, on this I build, and the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against me; no tribulation, or distress shall remove me; no presumption, nor security; no Righteousness, or want of legal Righteousness; not self-confidence, nor self-distrust; not spi-

ritual Riches, or Poverty; not Duties or want, or weakness in Duties; *not life, nor death*, life in Sin, or life of Grace; nor death in Sin, and death to Sin; nor *height, nor depth*, height of parts, or depths of imperfections; heights of assurance, or depths of desertion; but Christ is *all, and in all*. If I be found gleanings in any other field, fall upon me and spare not, here I have a Commission to glean, and gather full handfulls, among the sheaves of his large merits. If I have sinned, Christ is my Advocate; if offended, he is my Peace; if I pray, he is my Mediator, through whom I have access with confidence; if I have no righteousness, he hath, and lay claim to it, if I have, he hath a better; I disclaim my own. Christ is my only *Apologist* and *Apology*, I desire none to plead and answer for me, I need none; I make no *Excuse* for my self, he is my *Excuse-maker*, and all the Plea I shall put in is this, That his Name is called *Jehovah Tsidkenu*, the Lord our *righteousness*, *Jer. 23. 5*. Consider seriously dear Christians, are these thy Excuses, these are godly and safe ones, that the best have made use of to their preservation and comfort?

3. Or art thou a man of *Excuses*, and thy Obedience made up of such frivolous ones

ones as are before named, and dost thou think, when thou art to appear before the Lords Tribunal, to plead *Not guilty*, saying in thy own defence, for the Sins thou shalt be charged with, They were small, common, customary Sins, that it was thy nature, ill custome, thy drink, passion, ignorance, company, example of others, great, good men, multitude, Universality made thee to offend. That thou hast had a good intention, blind zeal, vows, promises, oaths, many good duties, a negative, or relative righteousness, diligence in thy Calling, conformity to humane Laws, and the like, which may plead thy Excuse; I testifie against thee, and assure thee, all these will prove a Curtaild Garment, too short and scant to cover thy nakedness, as the Prophet saith. *And El. 28.10. when the Lord shall lay Judgement to the Line, and Righteousness to the Plummer, the Hail shall sweep away thy refuge of Lyes, and the Waters shall overflow thy hiding places: Down comes this House built upon the Sand, and how sad shall be thy fall! The Lord will reject all thy Confidences of thy Innocency, and thou shalt not prosper in them.* Jer. 2.35. 37.

The last use of Exhortation or Dehortation.

I shall make no use of *Reproof*, the whole Discourse hath run that way, to reprove the Sin of Excuses. But our last Use shall be of Exhortation, and if I could make it an Use of *Remove*, I should not repent my pains. It is the usual manner of others, when they have been perswading and pressing their Hearers or Readers to any good, to conclude with *Exhortation*; I that have been all this while dissuading from Evil, shall conclude with *Dehortations*, and as they do usually back their Exhortations with Motives, I shall make it my design, to make my Dehortation from Excuses, to take effect by some *Remotives* and *Removers*; and there are four *Removers* I shall commend to the Christian Reader to prevent Excuses, and then commend all to God.

And the first *Remove* of Excuses, is ready and hearty *obedience*, get and practise this, and it is better then all Excuses; it prevents and removes them, so that there is no need of them at all. The Angel that could say, *I have done as thou hast commanded me*, Ezek. 9. 11. hath no need of any Excuse, nor did *Adam* need, or use any in his Innocency.

2. The next *Remove*, is *Repentance*. Because our obedience is imperfect, (not as the
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the Angels unfallen, or as *Adams* before his fall) our next course is Repentance, our *Secunda post Naufragium Tabula*; leaving all other frivolous Excuses, fly to this, this the best Remove next to Obedience. This procures a *Deleatur*, a cancelling of the Bill, a blotting out all our Sins, so is Gods promise, *Ezek. 18. 21.* Now where there is a removal, blotting out, and remission of Sin, there needs no more Excuse, or covering of Sin; when sin is pardoned, it is therefore said to be covered, *Psal. 32. 1.* *Blessed is he, whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered; blessed is he to whom the Lord imputeth not sin, &c.* All these Blessings came upon the truly penitent. And therefore there is no more need of Excuses, where there is no Sin. Repentance is the best Excuse, Apology, or clearing of our selves, as the Apostle calls it, *2 Cor. 7. 11.* (*Beza* renders it *Excusatio*, and so is the signification of the word grammatically:) it procures a Pardon, which no other Plea, or Apology can, and that gives a Covering, which all the Excuses in the world can never do. Of other Coverings that may be said, which the Prophet speaks, *Ezek. 30. 1.* *They cover with a Covering, but not of my Spirit, adding sin to sin; add Excuses to Excuses,*

- Prov. 28. and you add Sin to Sin. *He that so covereth*
 13. *his sins shall never prosper*, but he that confesseth and forsaketh shall find mercy; you will cover, and God will discover: But true Repentance is a great Cover-sin. This was the way which David took for clearing himself; and to have his Sin covered, he confessed, repented, cryed out, *I have sinned, done foolishly, wickedly*, and the Prophet said, The Lord hath taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die. Not guilty is the worst Plea we can make at Gods Tribunal, and to stand upon our Innocency. *Because thou sayest, I am Innocent, I will plead with thee*, Jer. 2. 35. Job durst not stand to this plea, *If I am righteous*, said he, I would not answer God to, but make my supplication, (as an humble Delinquent) to my Judge; our best way of speeding in Gods Court, contrary to what of man's, is to sue in *forma pauperis*, in *forma peccatoris*: *If I should wash my self in Snow water* saith Job again; and make my Hands never so clean, yet thou shalt plunge me in the Ditch, and make my Clothes to abhor me, my Excuses with which I would cover my Sin, would leave me in a worse pickle of pollution. That vile Shimai sped better at Davids hands, upon his speedy, and humbe submission, and acknowledgement-
- 2 Sam. 12. 13.
- Job 9. 15.
- v. 30. 31.
- 2 Sam. 19. 19, 20.

knowledge of his offences, then either the innocent *Amalekite*, that brought *Saul's Crown*, or those perfidious Brethren, that brought *Ishbosheth's Head*, when the one knew himself to be an offender, and the three last, thought they had merited; and looked for a reward. The penitent Prodigal had better Entertainment at the Father's hands, that cryed out, *Father, I have sinned*, then the elder Brother, that pleaded, he had never offended. *Judah's* Ingenuous confession of the miscarriage, what shall we say, or how can we clear ourselves, the Fact is apparent, God hath brought our Sins to light, we are all thy Servants, &c. so wrought upon *Joseph's* Bowels, that he could not speak one rough word more, but fell to embracing and comforting them.

3. In the third place, because both *Obedience* and *Repentance* are defective, our next Remove, is to fly to the blood of Christ by Faith, and this three-fold Cord will be sure to hold fast the Anchor of thy Soul. This is the only safe remove to trust to, and this gives a *superfedeas* to all other Excuses. Repentance is a good Cover-sin, in some cases, and goes a great way; but the Blood of Christ is all in all, when all is done, to cover and take away Sin, it cleanseth

2 Sam. 12.

15.

2 Sam. 4.

12.

1 Joh. 1.

7. 9.

cleanseth us from all unrighteousness. It was not all sorrow and contrition, but the offenders highting and flying to the City of Refuge, and abiding there, which did Excuse and secure him from the hands of the Avenger. And the death of the High Priest, did fully acquit him from his Crime. Christ is our great, and only Excuse-maker, our only Advocate and Mediator; and if be he our Apologist, we shall be ἀπαλόγητοι, without Excuse, in a good sense. Who is he that will contend with me, saith the penitent and believing Soul, flying to Christ, *He is near that Justifieth me*; who is he that will condemn, Christ hath died, &c. and he maketh Intercession for us; and his Intercession is above all the Pleas we can make for our selves. Benjamin came off better, by Judah's interceding for him, and Nabal by Abigails, then if either had spoken the best they could, in their own behalf. This made the Apostle desire to be found in Christ, not in his own righteousness. The Righteousness of Christ, if we speak properly, is the only Cover-sin, and his Bloud the only Expiation, and his Intercession our best plea and defence, and true Faith our best Title and Claim. By him all that believe are Justified (there's our safety) from all which

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Nom. 35.
25.

Esay. 50. 8

Phil. 3. 9.

we could not be Justified by the Law, Acts 13. 39. And to this give all the Prophets ^{Act. 10. 43} witness, that whosoever believeth in him, shall receive forgiveness of Sins; and where Remission is granted, there is no more need of Excuses. Christ saith to the troubled Soul, that is perplexed to think what answer to make, as to Mary Magdalen mourning, *why weepest thou?* what troubleth thee? is it any want? He saith as the good old man to the Levite, that knew not where to Lodge, *Peace be to thee, let all thy wants be upon me.* Is it Debt? He hath undertaken, and speaks to his Father in thy behalf, as Paul for Onesimus, *If he hath wronged, or oweth any thing, put that on my account.* Is it Sin? He saith in thy behalf, interceding for thee, as Abigail to David. *Upon me, upon me, let this Iniquity be charged.* He was made Sin for us, 2 Cor. 5. 21. Is it the Fathers Wrath and Curse thou fearest, as Jacob did his Fathers? He satisfieth thee in the words of Rebecka to her Son, *Fear not, upon me be the Curse,* ^{Gen. 27. 13.} *only obey my voice.* Christ hath redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, having been made a Curse for us, Gal 3. 13.

4. The fourth and last way to make sure against all sorry and beggarly Excuses, is to furnish thy self with solid, substantial, and

and unexceptible Excuses, such as can't be excepted against, such as the Servants of God of old were wont to repel any motion to sin, or diversion from duty by, whereof I shall instance in five out of the Old Testament, and as many out of the New.

And the first is that known one of *Joseph*, when thou art solicited to any base and sinful act, resist it with this, *How*
 Gen. 39. 9. *can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*

2. Get *Tamars* Excuse, when set upon in the most violent manner, by thy dearest Friend or Brother, to the perpetrating of any foul Sin, and say, *Nay, my Brother*
 2 Sam. 13. 11. 13. *desist, persuade me not, do not force me, no such thing ought to be done in Israel, and I, whither shall I cause my shame to go?*

3. It was a just and wise Excuse, that of the honest Souldier, for his refusal of *Joabs* Reward promised him, if he had slain *Absalom*, whom he saw hanging in the Tree; he should have had Ten Shekles, and a military Girdle for his pains. He answered discreetly, if thou wouldest give me a thousand Shekles, I dare not do it,
 2 Sam. 18. 10, 11, 12. *for the King charged thee in my bearing, not to touch the young man Absalom; otherwise, I should have wrought falsehood against*
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my own Life, for nothing is hid from the King, and thou thy self wouldst have set thy self against me. In which his Answer, he giveth in four weighty Reasons for his Excuse. 1. It were not safe for me to go against the expresse Charge of my Sovereign, at the pleasure of any Subordinate, how great soever. 2. For thy thousand Shekles, I should have paid dear for them, they would have cost me my Life, and I love not to buy Gold or Honour at so dear a rate; what good would the thousand Shekles, and the Girdle do me, If I must die, as soon as I should require them? and *I should have wrought the greatest falshood against my own Life*, which is more dear to me, than any Riches or Honour. 3. To be sure it would come out, *Nothing is hid from the King.* Kings have many Eyes, and many Ears abroad, and see more than others. 4. Thou thy self, who settest me on, when the matter should come to be scanned, couldst not carry me through, but wouldst have been a Witness against me. Wise, and weighty Considerations all. Oh, that we had the like in readiness, when tempted with whatsoever promises against the known Will of God. 1. I may not disobey my Chief, and the supream God, to gratifie any Inferiour whatsoever.

2. What

2. What should I Get, and what would it profit me, to gain the whole World, and to lose my own Soul. What folly or madness so great, as to be false to my own Soul? The Soul is of more worth, than all the Shekles, Girdles, Offices and Preferments in the World. 3. To be sure nothing is hid from the Eyes of him with whom we have to do, Kings have many Eyes, God is *Totus oculus*, all Eyes. 4. That is no lasting friendship which engageth thee to sin, *Thou thy self wouldst be against me.* He that is so forward to thrust thee into Sin, will be the first to come in against thee, and when thou comest to be questioned, will leave thee in the Lurch, when their own turn is served.

Neh. 6.3. 4. Noble and magnanimous was that Answer, returned by *Nehemiah*, when *Sanballat* and *Tobiab*, with others, sought by several Messages and Fetches, to divert him, and take him off from the Work, wherein he was engaged, he would not so much as once speak with them, but sends them this peremptory Answer for his Excuse. *I am about a great Work; I cannot come down to you, why should the Work cease, while I leave it to come to you?* They gave not over, but never left sending Message after Message, four or five times; but

but *Nebemiah* was the *same* man still; and stick to his former Resolution. It is likely, when thou art engaged in any Work, or Concern of God, it may be when but in thy Closet, the World, or thy carnal Friends, or thy outward Flesh may seek to divert and intercept thee; and thou hast no better Answer to return, then to say, *I am about a great Work*, Gods Work, Soul Work, *I cannot come down*, it must not be left so. Thou must take up *Nebemiah's* Resolution, when thou art entred upon any good Course, or all will come to nothing. *Non Vacat* is a better Plea sometimes, than *non Licet*. Said a Learned Ep: Sax-
derfon. Casuist.

5. The last Example of Excuse, out of the Old Testament, which I shall mention, is that of the *Rechabites*, who, when invited by the Prophet *Jeremy*, and that by Gods own direction (to take tryal of their temperance and obedience) into the Chamber of a good man, *Igdaliah* the man of God, where there was store of Wine in Cups and Flagons, not one of them would tast a Cup, but Excused themselves by this, *our Father Jonadab hath charged us to the contrary*. Oh, where shall we find these *Rechabites* now! whensoever thou art tempted to drink to Excess, return the
same

Eph. 5. 18. same answer, my Father hath said, *Be not drunk with Wine, wherein is Excess*, my Lord and Saviour hath given me a Charge,

Luk. 21. 34. *Let not your Hearts be surcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, lest that day come upon you unawares.* And although thou mayest be reproached for thy over niceness, by a company of Epicures and Atheists, it may be the Lord will say of thy House, as of the Rechabites, *Thy House shall stand and continue before him, when they have drunk out theirs, and theirs have spued out them.*

2. From the Old Testament, we shall pass to the New Testament, and with whom shall we begin, but with him who is the Example above all Examples, our Blessed Saviour? who, when he had been absent, and missed by his Parents, and carefully sought for, up and down among their Kindred and Friends, was at length found in the Temple among the Doctors, hearing, and asking them Questions, whom, when his Mother mildly reprehended, *Why hast thou thus dealt with us, behold thy Father and I have sought thee sorrowing.* His Reply and Excuse was, *I must be about my Fathers business.* Here you have the Example of a careful Mother, and of a more careful Son. She full of care for her Sons welfare, he of Religious Care

Care of his Fathers Concerns. *Blessed Member of God!* why shouldst thou take on so, and be sorry! Thy Son was not out of his way, when thou soughtst him, but thy self, thou mightest be sure to find him out of harms way, not among the Truants, but the Doctors, nor in the streets, but in the Temple, whither he did all his Life after continually resort. *Ob Blessed Son of God*, so be so careful of thy Fathers Business, when so young! and I not yet, when so old! Thou so forward, and I so backward! Thy Sun was up betimes, and moved (as the Sun in the Heaven) with the same regular and speedy motion in the morning, as at high noon. And our Sun riseth not till Noon, breaks not out sometimes till Even, before the setting. Thy Sun never had Solstice, all thy Life was motion, action, going about doing good, teaching, healing, seeking to save what was lost. And we so many Solstices and irregular motions. Thy forwardness condemns our backwardness, and thy Excuse is our Reproach, and leaves us without Excuse.

Here is a Pattern for you *Youths*, that are all for Play and Sports, remember your Saviour in the morning of his Youth, before he was yet entred into the Teens (when but twelve Years old) was
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found

found not in the streets among Play-fellows, but in the Temple among the grave Doctors; nor as a spectator of them, or Gazer on the Structure and Ornaments of the Temple, but an attentive Auditor; and as a great Proficient, was able both to propound and answer with so much understanding as was admirable, about matters of Religion. Learn thou the way to the Temple, and the place where the Teachers meet, to reverence and attend to them, that thy profiting may appear by thy understanding and answers, and enable thy self for holy Conference. Here is an Example also for Gentlemen and those of highest Birth, your *Highborn Lord* was not found among his Kinsfolks and Friends, as if his Business was to pay Civilities to friends, and acquaintance, to give and receive Visits and Treatments, which is all the account some can give of their time spending; nor was he ever found in the Tavern or Theater; but now and after constantly in the Temple. But alas, how many are there whom you may seek long enough ere you find them in the Temple; in the Tavern every day, at the Temple seldom; at the Theater they never miss, among they Players; among the Doctors, or Teachers seldom, specially

Speciallly expresseing any reverence or devotion, but as if they came rather to scoff than learn. But let such consider seriously, can they say, if asked what makest thou here? *I am about my Fathers Business.* Yea, this may be an Example to all men to attend their Callings; and to mind the Business which God sets them to do; *Minister Verbe es 2, hoc age;* was famous *Perkins's* Motto; that wheresoever thou art found, thou mayst be found so doing. And this will be thy best discharge, *I must be about my Fathers Business.*

2. We must obey God rather than men; is a just Excuse, when God commands one thing and man another, as was the case of the Apostles, *Peter* and *John* when Acts 5.
28, 29. they returned that answer to the High Priests Charge, of Preaching no more in the Name of Christ. But be sure the thing thou stickest at be so indeed, and not in thy Imagination; lest whilst thou sufferest for not obeying man, thou mayst also sin in disobeying God too, whose Command is, Superiours should be obeyed in all Lawfull things.

3. That was an excellent Excuse which *Saint Paul* made (being in Bonds pursued by many enraged Enemies, and charged with heavy Crimes) *Men and Brethren, Acts 13. 1.*

1 Pet. 3.
21.

I have lived in all good Conscience, and that before God to this day. The only Excuse in the world Saint Bernard calls it. *Peccata & absoluta cuique Testimonium Conscientie sue.* Saint Peter calls it the answer of a good Conscience. Saint Paul had as many heavy Adversaries as ever man had, had as many grievous Crimes laid to his charge, as the great Incendiary and Pest in the State; and an *Heresiarche*, Arch Heretick in the Church; a mover of Sedition and a Ring-leader of the new Sect of the *Nazarens* (*alias* Christians, or true Believers) as *Tertullus* laid to his charge, yet stands he like a Brazen Wall, and as easily acquits himself of all their Accusations, as he did once his Hand of the Viper which he shook off, with this, *I have lived in all good Conscience before God.* An accusing Conscience is the worst Accuser, and the Excusing Conscience, the best Excuser. Exercise thy self therefore in this Art of Christianity, to have *always a Conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.* If thou hast God and a good Conscience on thy side, thou needest not care who is against thee; thou hast Compurgators enough, it will be with thee as it was with that famous *Cato*, who had many Accusers and many Tryals, but *quoties accusatus,*

Act. 24.
16.

accusatus, toties absolutus, it was said of him, he had as many Judicial Absolutions, as he had unjust Accusations, and so came off ever with honour.

4. See if thou canst make the same Apostles Excuse, or Excuses, *Rom. 7.* from *verse 14.* to the end. When in the Review of thy spiritual state thou seest so much for which to condemn or abhor thy self, as that thou fallest short of the Law, (*that spiritual, thou carnal,*) short in thy performances (*the good I would, I do not,*) that thou art pestered with such a depraved nature, (*that when thou wouldst do good, evil is still present, &c.*) see if thou canst find the same temper of a gracious Spirit (under these conflicts) in three respects which was in him. 1. As to Evil. 2. As to Good. 3. As to the Law prescribing good, forbidding Evil. 1. As to *Evil*, canst thou say, That there is no Evil thou dost allow thy self in, *v. 15.* 2. No beloved Sin, *The Evil which I hate, v. 15.* 3. No voluntary, wilful Sin, *That which I would not, v. 16. and. 19.*

3. As to good, 1. though I fail in doing, I fail not in *desiring*, in endeavouring. My will is good, though performance poor, to will is present with me, though how to perform what is good in such a manner as

I would, I find not. 2. Of all good, he saith, *It is that be lover, it is the good he would* v. 19.

3. As to the Law prescribing Good, and forbidding Evil, canst thou say as he did, 1. *That the Law is holy, and the Commandement holy, just and good?* v. 12. A wicked man will say the Commandement is holy and just (it may be too holy and too just,) but how to call it good he can hardly tell, it doth so meet with him and cros his Lusts.

2. Canst thou say thou consentest and subscribest to the Equity and Purity of the Law, v. 16. *I consent to the Law that it is good.* I tell you it is a gracious Heart that can say so, I like not the Law the worse for its strictness and purity, I find no fault with God's holy Law, all the fault I find is with my own unholy Heart, I wish not for a better Law, but a better Heart.

3. And canst thou say further, *Thou delightest in the Law of God, and in thy Inner Man*, v. 22. That thou dost heartily close with that though it make against thee, and command more and better obedience than thou dost perform, and reprove and threaten Sin.

I say this is a fair conflicting man's Excuse,

cuse, and doth clear thee from being a Hypocrite.

The fift and last Excuse, and that which is simply and absolutely the best and fittest for us in our frail and imperfect estate to fly unto, with which I shall conclude this Discourse, and with which I heartily wish thou and I may conclude our Lives, *We fly to Christ.* This is our *ultimum refugium*, our last refuge, when all fails, and we are by Satan beaten out of all our holds and pleas. This is the Excuse Saint John furnisheth us withall, 1 Joh. 2. 2. *If any man sin (and he that saith he doth not, is a Lyar) We have, saith he, an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our sins.* Christ is our Advocate, Spokesman, Surety, Excuse-maker. An Advocate is properly one that is of Counsel for a Client to assist him and plead his Cause in Court, which he cannot so well do for himself. Christ is such an Advocate. It were ill with us if we were to plead our own Cause and to answer for our selves. But if Christ undertake for us there is no fear of miscarrying, how deplorate and desperate soever thou judgest thy Case. He hath carryed the whole Company of Believers (and some of them had been as great sinners as

any other) through the Briers and is able to save thee to the utmost by his Intercession. This hath born up the Spirits of Sinners in their greatest Agonies. *Charles the Fifth* when near to Death, is said to comfort himself (when in great perplexity about his future state) with this. Christ, said he, had a double Title to Heaven, the one in right of his Sonship, the other by the merit of his Passion, he was content to make use of the one for himself, and hath left me the other which is all my Claim, and I am sure that I making this Claim shall never be disappointed. It was *St. Bernard's* before: *Satan* is the great Accuser, and *Christ* the only Excuser. He our Surety, Mediator, Justifier, Advocate, he was wont to plead in the Behalf of his Servants, against their Accusers; of his Disciples against the Pharisees, *Mat. 12. 3.* For *Mary* against *Marius*, *Luke 10. 41.* For *Mary Magdalen* against *Simon*, *Luke 7. 40.* He fetcht off the Woman taken in Adultery (ready to be stoned) with one word speaking. His word goes far and his blood speaks better things for us, then a thousand Prayers, Tears, Alms, or all our Faith, Repentance, Obedience can do, then the best blood of Martyrs, or all the Intercession of Saints and Angels, *Heb. 9. 14.*

Benjamin

Benjamin might thank God for a good Brother that became Surety for him first, and Advocate for him at last, that he was brought off so well. Onesimus might thank God he had such an Advocate as Paul to prevail with his Master for his Reception. And we are all bound to give thanks for Jesus Christ who is become our Surety and will be our Advocate. For what once our Saviour said to the obdurate Jews to the aggravation of their Sin and increase of their Condemnation, *If I had not come and spoken to them, and done the works which no other man did, they had had no Sin, but now they have no Cloak, or Excuse* (as it is in the Margin) *for their Sin,* that he speaketh to his Servants by way of Consolation, *If I had not come into the world and done and suffered that for you which none other could, you had had no Cloak, nor Excuse for your Sins, but now I am your Surety and Advocate, I have taken away your Sins, and shall present you holy and unblamable and unreprouable in the sight of God, Col. 1. 22.*
Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the World.

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